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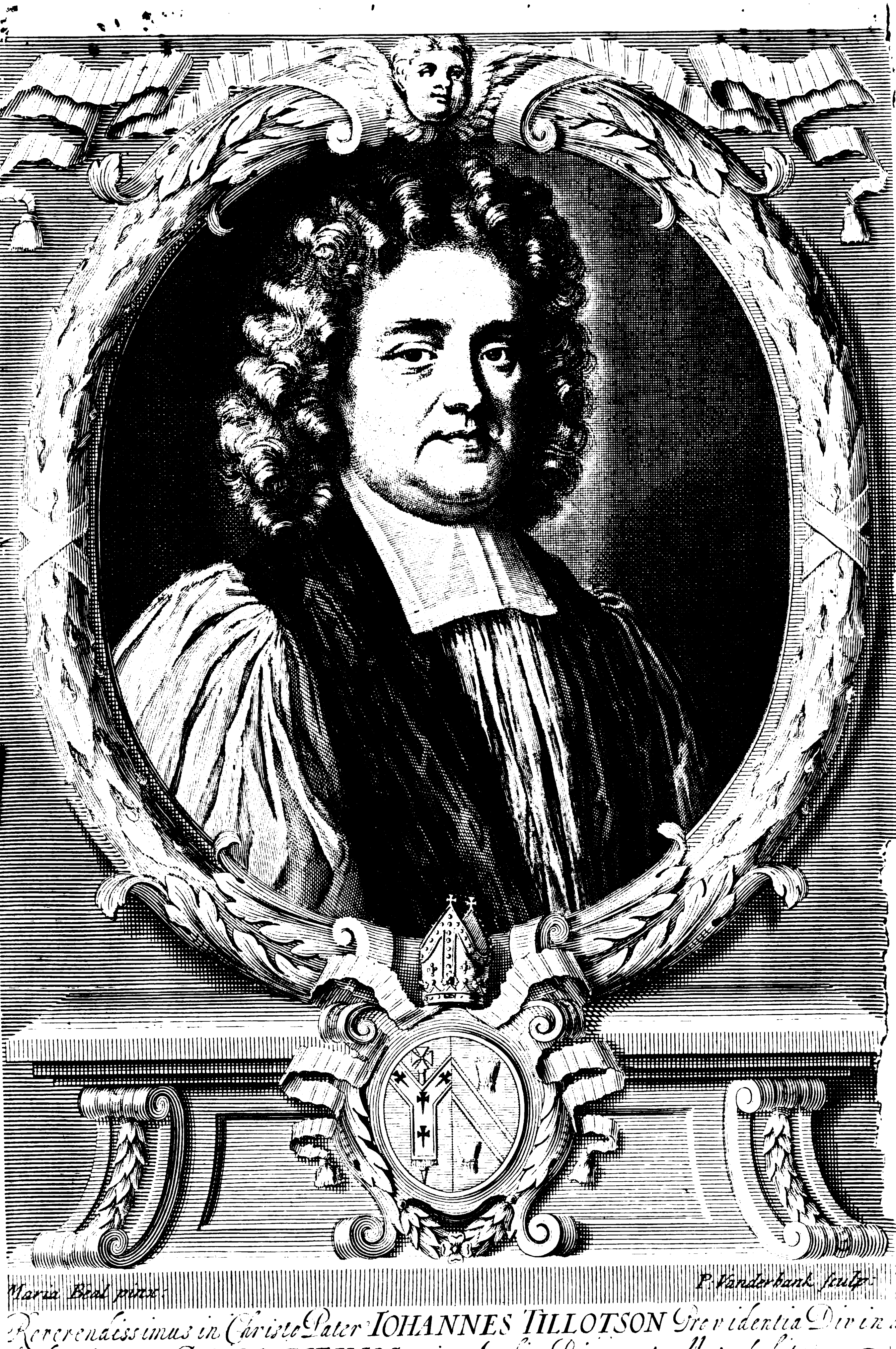
"His Grace's Sermons, besides the plainness & familiarity of the expression, & the other beauties of style, have this advantage beyond other controversial writings, that his arguments against Popery being intermixed with more practical truths, are read with pleasure & delight by such persons who would never endure the fatigue of turning over & considering a book writ closely, & consisting only of dry argumentation."

Atterbury.

Revd. J. C. Barrett. p VI. /-

Hale



Maria Beal pinx. P. Vanderbank sculp.

Reverendissimus in Christo Pater IOHANNES TILLOTSON Providentia Divina
Archiepiscopus CANTUARIENSIS totius Angliæ Primas et Metropolitanus Se
issimis Principibus Regi GULIELMO et Reginæ MARIÆ á Secretioribus Consi

Printed for Brab. Aylmer & Wm Rogers

THE
WORKS
Of the Moſt Reverend
Dr. John Tillotſon,
LATE
Lord Archbiſhop of CANTERBURY:
CONTAINING
Fifty four Sermons and Diſcourſes,
On SEVERAL OCCASIONS.
Together with
The RULE of FAITH.
BEING
ALL that were Publiſhed by his GRACE Himſelf.
And now Collected into *One Volume.*

To which is Added,
An Alphabetical TABLE *of the Principal Matters.*

LONDON:
Printed for B. AYLMER, at the *Three Pigeons* againſt the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill.* And W. ROGERS, at the *Sun* againſt St. *Dunſtan*'s Church in *Fleetſtreet.* MDCXCVI.

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1806

To the Worſhipful

The MASTERS of the BENCH,

And the reſt of the

MEMBERS

OF THE

Honourable Society of Lincolns-Inn.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN I reſolv'd to publiſh theſe Sermons, there could be no diſpute to whom I ſhould dedicate them. They do of right belong to you, being moſt of them firſt preach'd among you; beſides my great obligation to you for your conſtant reſpects to me, both in the favourable acceptance, and in the generous encouragement of my labours, ever ſince I had the honour and happineſs to be related to you. In a thankful acknowledgment whereof I humbly preſent this ſmall part of them to you, hoping that by the bleſſing of God they may be of ſome uſe for the promoting of true piety and vertue, which is the ſincere wiſh and aim of

Your moſt obliged

and faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

18415

THE

PREFACE.

I *Shall neither trouble the* Reader, *nor my ſelf, with any apology for the publiſhing of theſe* Sermons. *For if they be in any meaſure truly ſerviceable to the end for which they are deſign'd, to eſtabliſh men in the Principles of Religion, and to recommend to them the practice of it with any conſiderable advantage, I do not ſee what Apology is neceſſary, and if they be not ſo, I am ſure none can be ſufficient. However if there need any, the common heads of excuſe in theſe caſes are very well known; and I hope I have an equal right to them with other men.*

I ſhall chuſe rather in this Preface, *to give a ſhort account of the following* Diſcourſes; *and as briefly as I can to vindicate a ſingle* paſſage *in the* firſt *of them from the Exceptions of a* Gentleman *who hath been pleas'd to honour it ſo far as to write a whole Book againſt it.*

The Deſign of theſe Diſcourſes *is fourfold.*

Firſt, *To ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of* Atheiſm, *and of* ſcoffing at Religion; *which I am ſorry is ſo neceſſary to be done in this Age. This I have endeavour'd in the* two firſt *of theſe* Diſcourſes.

Secondly, *To recommend Religion to men from the great and manifold* advantages *which it brings both to* publick Society *and to* particular perſons. *And this is the argument of the* third *and* fourth.

Thirdly, *To repreſent the* excellency, *more particularly, of the* Chriſtian Religion; *and to* vindicate the practice of it *from the ſuſpicion of thoſe* grievous troubles and difficulties *which many imagine it to be attended withal. And this is the ſubject of the* fifth *and* ſixth.

Fourthly, *To perſuade men to the practice of this holy Religion, from the* great obligation which the profeſſion of Chriſtianity *lays upon men to that purpoſe; and more particularly, from the glorious rewards of another life; which is the deſign of the* two laſt Diſcourſes.

Having given this ſhort account of the following Diſcourſes, *I crave leave of the* Reader *to detain him a little longer, whilſt I vindicate a* paſſage *in the firſt of theſe* Sermons, *from the aſſaults of a whole* Book *purpoſely writ againſt it. The* Title *of the* Book *is* Faith vindicated from the poſſibility of Falſhood. *The Author Mr.* J. S. *the famous* Author of Sure-footing. *He hath indeed in this laſt Book of his, to my great amazement, quitted that glorious* Title. *Not that I dare aſſume to my ſelf to have put him out of conceit with it, by having convinc'd him of the fantaſticalneſs of it. No, I deſpair to convince that man of any thing, who after ſo fair an admonition does ſtill perſiſt to maintain,* * *That* firſt and ſelf-evident Principles *not only may, but are fit to be demonſtrated;*

* Letter of Thanks, p. 24, &c.

† Ibid p. 11. *monſtrated*; *and* † *that thoſe ridiculous identical Propoſitions*, *that* Faith is Faith, *and a* Rule is a Rule, *are* firſt Principles *in this Controverſy of the* Rule of Faith, *without which nothing* can be ſolidly concluded either about Rule or Faith. *But there was another reaſon for his quitting of that* Title, *and a prudent one indeed: He hath forſaken the defence of* Sure-footing, *and then it became convenient to lay aſide that* Title, *for fear of putting people any more in mind of that Book.*

* P. 14. *I expected indeed after his* Letter of Thanks, *in which he* * *tells us*, *he* intended to throw aſide the rubbiſh of my *Book*, that in his Anſwer he might the better lay open the Fabrick of my Diſcourſe, and have nothing there to do, but to ſpeak to ſolid Points; *I ſay*, *after this*, *I expected a full Anſwer to* the ſolid Points *(as he is pleaſed to call them) of my Book*; *and that*, *(according to his excellent method of* removing the rubbiſh, *in order to the pulling down of a building) the* Fabrick *of my Book would long ſince have been demoliſh'd and laid even with the ground. But eſpecially, when in the concluſion of that moſt civil and obliging Letter*, *he threatn'd* never to leave following on his blow, till he had either brought Dr. *Still.* and me to lay Principles that would bear the teſt, or it was made evident to all the world that we had none: *I began (as I had reaſon) to be in a terrible fear of him, and to look upon my ſelf as a dead man. And indeed who can think himſelf ſo conſiderable as not to dread this mighty man of* Demonſtration, *this Prince of* Controvertiſts, *this great Lord and Poſſeſſor of* Firſt Principles? *But I perceive that great minds are merciful, and do ſometimes content themſelves to threaten when they could deſtroy.*

* P. 13. *For inſtead of returning a full Anſwer to my Book, he (according to their* new mode *of confuting Books) manfully falls a nibbling at one ſingle* paſſage *in it*, pag. 118. *wherein he makes me to ſay (for I ſay no ſuch thing) that* the Rule of Chriſtian Faith, and conſequently Faith it ſelf, is poſſible to be falſe. *Nay in his* Letter of Thanks, * *he ſays* it is an avow'd Poſition, *in that place*, that Faith is poſſible to be falſe. *And to give the more countenance to this calumny, he chargeth the ſame* Poſition (in equivalent terms) of the poſſible falſhood of Faith, and that as to the chiefeſt and moſt fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity, *upon the forementioned* Sermon. *But becauſe he knew in his conſcience, that I had avow'd no ſuch* Poſition, *he durſt not cite the words either of my* Book *or* Sermon, *leſt the Reader ſhould have diſcover'd the notorious falſhood and groundleſneſs of this Calumny: Nay he durſt not ſo much as refer to any particular place in my Sermon, where ſuch a* paſſage *might be found. And yet this is the Man that has the face to charge others with falſe citations, to which charge, before I have done, I ſhall ſay ſomething, which (what effect ſoever it may have upon him) would make any other man ſufficiently aſham'd.*

But yet I muſt acknowledge, that in this Poſition *which he faſtens upon me, he honours me with excellent company, my Lord* Faulkland, *Mr.* Chillingworth, *and Dr.* Stillingfleet; *Perſons of that admirable ſtrength and clearneſs in their* Writings, *that Mr.* S. *when he reflects upon his own ſtyle and way of reaſoning, may bluſh to acknowledge that ever he has read them. And as to this* Poſition *which he charges them withal, I do not know (nor have the leaſt reaſon upon Mr.* S's *word to believe) any ſuch thing is maintained by them.*

As for my ſelf, whom I am now only concern'd to vindicate, I ſhall ſet down the two Paſſages, *to which I ſuppoſe he refers.*

In my Sermon, *I endeavour (among other things) to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of* Atheiſm *upon this account:* Becauſe it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *To make this good, I diſcourſe thus: Ariſtotle* hath long ſince obſerved, how unreaſonable it is to expect the ſame kind of Proof for every thing, which we have for ſome things. Mathematical things being of an abſtracted nature, are only capable of clear Demonſtration. But Concluſions in Natural Philoſophy, are to be prov'd by a ſufficient Induction of experiments; things of a Moral nature, by Moral Arguments, and Matters of Fact by credible Teſtimony. And though none of theſe be ſtrict Demonſtration, yet have we an undoubted aſſurance of them, when they are prov'd by the beſt Arguments that the nature and quality of the thing will bear. None can demonſtrate to me, that there is ſuch an Iſland in *America* as *Jamaica*; yet upon the Teſtimony of credible perſons, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as from doubting of the cleareſt Mathematical Demonſtration. So that this is to be entertain'd as a firm Principle, by all thoſe who pretend to be certain of any thing at all, that when any thing is prov'd by as good Arguments as that thing is capable of, and we have as great aſſurance that it is, as we could poſſibly have ſuppoſing it were, we ought not in reaſon to make any doubt of the exiſtence of that thing. Now to apply this to the preſent caſe. The Being of God is not Mathematically demonſtrable, nor can it be expected it ſhould; becauſe only Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be prov'd immediately by ſenſe, becauſe God being ſuppos'd to be a pure Spirit, cannot be the object of any corporeal ſenſe. But yet we have as great aſſurance that there is a God, as the nature of the thing to be prov'd is capable of, and as we could in reaſon expect to have, ſuppoſing that he were.

Upon this paſſage it muſt be (if any thing in the Sermon) *that Mr.* S. *chargeth this* Poſition (in equivalent terms) of the poſſible falſhood of Faith, and that as to the chiefeſt and moſt fundamental Point, the Tenet of a Deity. *And now I appeal to the Reader's Eyes and Judgment, whether the ſum of what I have ſaid, be not this, That though the exiſtence of God be not capable of that ſtrict kind of Demonſtration which Mathematical matters are, yet, that we have an undoubted aſſurance of it. One would think that no man could be ſo ridiculous as from hence to infer, that I believe it poſſible, notwithſtanding this aſſurance, that there ſhould be no God. For however in many other caſes an undoubted aſſurance that a thing is, may not exclude all ſuſpicion of a poſſibility of its being otherwiſe; yet in this* Tenet of a Deity *it moſt certainly does. Becauſe whoever is aſſur'd that there is a God, is aſſur'd there is a Being whoſe exiſtence is and always was neceſſary, and conſequently is aſſured that it is impoſſible he ſhould not be, and involves in it a contradiction. So that my Diſcourſe is ſo far from being* equivalent *to the* Poſition *he mentions, that it is a perfect contradiction to it. And he might with as much truth have affirm'd, that I had expreſly, and in ſo many words ſaid that there is no God.*

The other paſſage is in pag. 118. *of my* Book, *concerning* the Rule of Faith. *I was diſcourſing that no man can* ſhew by any neceſſary argument, that it is naturally impoſſible that all the Relations concerning *America* ſhould be falſe. *But* yet (*ſay I*) I ſuppoſe that notwithſtanding this, no man in his wits is now poſſeſt with ſo incredible a folly, as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient Book, and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions: We have no demonſtration for theſe things, and we expect none; becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any Book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be; or that it was written by him whoſe Name it bears; or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages in it; it is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe: But we are very well aſſur'd that it is not, nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it; For a bare poſſibility that a thing may be, or not be, is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the people in *France* may dye this night, but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline any man in the leaſt to think it will be ſo. It is poſſible that the Sun may not riſe to morrow morning; yet for all this I ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doubt but that it will.

To avoid the cavils of this impertinent Man, I have tranſcrib'd the whole Page *to which he refers. And now where is this* avow'd Poſition of the poſſible falſhood of Faith? *All that I ſay is this, That we are not* infallible *either in judging of the antiquity of a Book, or of the ſenſe of it; by which I mean (as any man of ſenſe and ingenuity would eaſily perceive I do) that we cannot demonſtrate theſe things ſo, as to ſhew that the contrary neceſſarily involves a contradiction; but yet that we may have a firm aſſurance concerning theſe matters, ſo as not to make the leaſt doubt of them.*

And is this to avow the poſſible falſhood of Faith? *And yet this* Poſition *Mr. S. charges upon theſe words; how juſtly I ſhall now examine.*

Either by Faith *Mr.* S. *means the* Doctrine *reveal'd by God, and then the meaning of the* Poſition *muſt be,* that what God ſays, is poſſible to be falſe; *which is ſo abſurd a* Poſition *as can hardly enter into any man's mind; and yet Mr. S. hath the modeſty all along in his* Book *to inſinuate that in the forecited* Paſſage *I ſay as much as this comes to.*

Or elſe Mr. S. *means by* Faith, *the* aſſent *which we give to Doctrines as reveal'd by God; and then his ſenſe of infallibility muſt be either, that whoever aſſents to any thing as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd, upon ſuppoſition that it is ſo reveal'd; or elſe abſolutely, that whoever aſſents to any thing as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd. Now although I do not, in the* Paſſage *forecited, ſpeak one ſyllable concerning Doctrines reveal'd by God, yet I affirm (and ſo will any man elſe) that an aſſent to any Doctrine as revealed by God, if it be revealed by him, is impoſſible to be falſe. But this is only an infallibility* upon ſuppoſition, *which amounts to no more than this,* That if a thing be true, it is impoſſible to be falſe. *And yet the principal deſign of Mr.* S's Book *is to prove this, which I believe no man in the world was ever ſo ſenſeleſs as to deny. But if he mean* abſolutely, *that whoever aſſents to any Doctrine as reveal'd by God, cannot be deceiv'd, that is, that no man can be miſtaken about matters of Faith (as he muſt mean, if he pretend to have any adverſary, and do not fight only with his own ſhadow,) this I confeſs is a very comfortable aſſertion, but I am much afraid it is not true.*

Or elſe, laſtly, By Faith *he underſtands the* Means *and* Motives *of Faith. And then the plain ſtate of the controverſie between us is this,* Whether it be neceſſary to a Chriſtian belief to be infallibly ſecur'd of the means whereby the Chriſtian Doctrine is convey'd to us, and of the firmneſs of the Motives upon which our belief of it is grounded. *This indeed is ſomething to the purpoſe; for though in the* paſſage *before-cited, I ſay not one word concerning the Motives of our Belief of the Chriſtian Doctrine, yet my diſcourſe there was intended to be apply'd to the* means *whereby the knowledge of this Doctrine is convey'd to us. However, I am contented to joyn iſſue with Mr. S. upon both theſe Points.*

1. *That it is not neceſſary to the true nature of* Faith, *that the* Motives *upon which any man believes the Chriſtian Doctrine ſhould be abſolutely concluſive, and impoſſible to be falſe. That it is neceſſary, Mr.* S. *ſeveral times affirms in his* Book;

Book ; *but how unreaſonably, appears from certain and daily experience. Very many Chriſtians* (*ſuch as St.* Auſtin *ſpeaks of*, as ſav'd not by the quickneſs of their underſtandings, but the ſimplicity of their belief) *do believe the Chriſtian Doctrine upon incompetent grounds, and their belief is true, though the argument upon which they ground it be not* (*as Mr.* S. *ſays*) abſolutely concluſive of the thing: *And he that thus believes the Chriſtian Doctrine, if he adhere to it, and live accordingly, ſhall undoubtedly be ſav'd; and yet I hope Mr.* S. *will not ſay that any man ſhall be ſaved without true Faith. I might add, that in this* Aſſertion *Mr.* S. *is plainly contradicted by thoſe of his own Church.*

For they generally grant, that *General Councils*, though they be infallible in their *Definitions* and *Concluſions*, yet are not always ſo in their *Arguments* and reaſonings about them. And the *Guide* of Controverſies * *expreſly ſays*, *P. 35. that it is not neceſſary that a Divine Faith ſhould always have an external rationally infallible ground or motive thereto (whether Church-Authority, or any other) on his part, that ſo believes. *Here is a man of their own Church* avowing *this* Poſition, That Faith is poſſible to be falſe. *I deſire Mr.* S. *who is the very* Rule *of Controverſie, to do juſtice upon this falſe* Guide.

I muſt acknowledge that Mr. S. *attempts to prove this* Aſſertion, *and that by a very pleaſant and ſurprizing Argument, which is this.* The profound Myſteries of Faith (*he tells us* †) muſt needs ſeem to ſome, (*viz.* thoſe †Faith. vind. p. 90. who have no light but their pure natural Reaſon, * *as he ſaid before*) *P. 89. impoſſible to be true; which therefore nothing but a Motive of its own nature ſeemingly impoſſible to be falſe can conquer ſo as to make them conceit them really true. *What Mr.* S. *here means by a Motive* of its own nature ſeeming *impoſſible to be falſe, I cannot divine, unleſs he means a* real ſeeming *impoſſibility. But be that as it will; does Mr.* S. *in good earneſt believe that a* Motive of its own nature ſeeming impoſſible to be falſe, *is ſufficient to convince any man, that has and uſes* the light of natural Reaſon, *of the truth of a thing* which muſt needs ſeem to him impoſſible to be true? *In my opinion theſe two ſeeming impoſſibilities are ſo equally matched, that it muſt needs be a drawn Battel between them. Suppoſe the thing to be believed be* Tranſubſtantiation; *this indeed is a very* profound *Myſtery, and is* (*to ſpeak in Mr.* S'*s phraſe*) of its own nature ſo ſeemingly impoſſible, *that I know no* argument *in the world ſtrong enough to cope with it. And I challenge Mr.* S. *to inſtance in any* Motive of Faith *which is, both to our underſtanding and our ſenſes, more plainly impoſſible to be falſe than their Doctrine of* Tranſubſtantiation *is evidently impoſſible to be true. And if he cannot; how can he reaſonably expect that any man in the World ſhould believe it?*

2. *That it is not neceſſary to the true nature of* Faith, *that we ſhould be infallibly ſecur'd of the means whereby the Chriſtian Doctrine is convey'd to us; particularly of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and that the expreſſions in it cannot poſſibly bear any other ſenſe. And theſe are the very things I inſtance in, in the* paſſage *ſo often mention'd. And to theſe Mr.* S. *ought to have ſpoken, if he intended to have confuted that* paſſage. *But he was reſolv'd not to ſpeak diſtinctly, knowing his beſt play to be in the dark, and that all his ſafety lay in the confuſion and obſcurity of his talk.*

Now that to have an infallible ſecurity in theſe particulars *is not neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, is evident upon theſe two accounts; becauſe Faith may be without this infallible ſecurity, and becauſe in the particulars mention'd it is impoſſible to be had.*

1. *Becauſe Faith may be without this infallible ſecurity. He that is ſo aſſur'd of the Antiquity and Authority of the Books of Scripture, and of the ſenſe of thoſe Texts wherein the Doctrines of Chriſtianity are plainly delivered, as to ſee no juſt cauſe to doubt thereof, may really aſſent to thoſe Doctrines, though he have no infallible ſecurity. And an aſſent ſo grounded I affirm to have the true nature of Faith. For what degree of* aſſent, *and what ſecurity of the* Means, *which convey to us the knowledge of Chriſtianity, are neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, is to be eſtimated from the end of Faith, which is the ſalvation of mens ſouls. And whoever is ſo aſſur'd of the* authority *and* ſenſe *of Scripture, as to believe the Doctrine of it, and to live accordingly, ſhall be ſaved. And ſurely ſuch a belief as will ſave a man hath the true nature of Faith, though it be not infallible. And if God have ſufficiently provided for the ſalvation of men of all capacities, it is no ſuch reflection upon* the goodneſs and wiſdom of Providence, *as Mr.* S. *imagines, that he hath not taken care that every man's Faith ſhould arrive to the degree of infallibility; nor does our Bleſſed Saviour, for not having made this proviſion, deſerve* to be eſteem'd by all the world not a wiſe Lawgiver, but a mere Ignoramus and Impoſtor, *as* * *one of his* fellow Controvertiſts *ſpeaks with reverence.*

Beſides, this aſſertion that infallibility is neceſſary to the true nature of that aſſent which we call Faith, *is plainly falſe upon another account alſo; becauſe Faith admits of degrees. But Infallibility has none. The Scripture ſpeaks of a weak and a ſtrong Faith, and of the increaſe of Faith; but I never heard of a weak and ſtrong Infallibility. Infallibility is the higheſt perfection of the knowing faculty, and conſequently the firmeſt degree of aſſent upon the firmeſt grounds, and which are known to be ſo. But will Mr.* S. *ſay, That the higheſt degree of aſſent admits of degrees, and is capable of increaſe? Infallibility is an abſolute impoſſibility of being deceived; now I deſire Mr.* S. *to ſhew me the degrees of abſolute impoſſibility; and if he could do that, and conſequently there might be degrees of Infallibility, yet I cannot believe that Mr.* S. *would think fit to call any degree of Infallibility a* weak Faith *or aſſent.*

2. *Becauſe an infallible ſecurity in the particulars mentioned, is impoſſible to be had; I mean in an ordinary way, and without miracle and particular revelation; becauſe the nature of the thing is incapable of it. The utmoſt ſecurity we have of the antiquity of any Book is human Teſtimony, and all human Teſtimony is fallible for this plain reaſon, becauſe all men are fallible. And though Mr.* S. *in defence of his beloved Tradition is pleas'd to ſay that human Teſtimony in ſome caſes is infallible, yet I think no man before him was ever ſo hardy as to maintain that the Teſtimony of fallible men is infallible. I grant it to be in many caſes certain; that is, ſuch as a conſiderate man may prudently rely and proceed upon, and hath no juſt cauſe to doubt of; and ſuch as none but an obſtinate man or a fool can deny. And that thus the learned men of his own Church define* certainty, *Mr.* S. *(if he would but vouchſafe to read ſuch Books) might have learnt from* * Melchior Canus, *who ſpeaking of the firmneſs of human Teſtimony in ſome caſes (which yet he did not believe to be infallible) defines it thus,* Thoſe things are certain among men, which cannot be deny'd without obſtinacy and folly. *I know Mr.* S. *is pleaſed to ſay, that* certainty *and* infallibility *are all one. And he is the firſt man that I know of that ever ſaid it. And yet perhaps ſome-body may have been before him in it, for I remember* Tully *ſays,* That there is nothing ſo fooliſh but ſome Philoſopher or other has ſaid it. *I am ſure Mr.* S.*'s own* Philoſopher *Mr.* Wh. *contradicts him in this moſt clearly, in his* Preface *to* Ruſhworth*'s* Dialogues; *where explicating the term* Moral certainty, *he tells us, that* ſome underſtood by it

ſuch

* Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis, *p.* 77.

* De lo. Theol. lib 11. c. 4. Certa apud homines ea ſunt, quæ negari ſine pervicacia, & ſtultitia non poſſunt.

ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working other ways; *and this preſently after he tell us*, ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors conſider'd as miſtaken in undervaluing it. *So that according to Mr.*Wh. *true certainty may conſiſt with a poſſibility of the contrary, and conſequently Mr.*S. *is miſtaken in thinking certainty and infallibility to be all one. Nay, I do not find any two of them agreeing among themſelves, about the notions of infallibility and certainty. Mr.* Wh. *ſays, that what ſome call* moral certainty, *is true certainty, though it do not take away a poſſibility of the contrary. Mr.* S. *aſſerts the direct contrary, that Moral certainty is only probability becauſe it does not take away the poſſibility of the contrary. The* Guide in Controverſies * *differs from them both, and makes* moral, certain *and* infallible *all one. I deſire that they would agree theſe matters among themſelves before they quarrel with us about them.*

*P. 135.

In brief then, though moral certainty *be ſometimes taken for a high degree of probability which can only produce a doubtful aſſent; yet it is alſo frequently us'd for a firm and undoubted aſſent to a thing upon ſuch grounds as are fit fully to ſatiſfy a prudent man; and in this ſenſe I have always us'd this* Term. *But now* infallibility *is an abſolute ſecurity of the underſtanding from all poſſibility of miſtake in what it believes. And there are but two ways for the underſtanding to be thus ſecur'd; either by the perfection of its own nature, or by ſupernatural aſſiſtance. But no human underſtanding being abſolutely ſecur'd from poſſibility of miſtake by the perfection of its own nature (which I think all mankind except Mr.* S. *have hitherto granted) it follows, that no man can be infallible in any thing, but by ſupernatural aſſiſtance. Nor did ever the Church of* Rome *pretend to infallibility upon any other account, as every one knows that hath been converſant in the Writings of their Learned men. And Mr.* Creſſy *in his* * *Anſwer to Dr.* Pierce *hath not the face to contend for any other infallibility but this, that* the immutable God can actually preſerve a mutable creature from actual mutation: *But I can by no means agree with him in what immediately follows, concerning the* Omniſcience *of a creature; that God,* who is abſolutely omniſcient, can teach a rational Creature all truths neceſſary or expedient to be known; ſo that though a man may have much ignorance, yet he may be in a ſort omniſcient within a determinate ſphere. Omniſcient within a determinate ſphere; *is an infinite without a finite ſphere; and is not that a very pretty ſort of knowing all things, which may conſiſt with an ignorance of many things? Of all the* Controvertiſts *I have met with (except Mr.*S.) *Mr.* Creſſy *is the happieſt at theſe ſmart and ingenious kind of reaſonings.*

*P. 88, 89.

As to the other Particular *of the ſenſe of Books, it is likewiſe plainly impoſſible that any thing ſhould be deliver'd in ſuch clear and certain words as are abſolutely incapable of any other ſenſe; and yet notwithſtanding this, the meaning of them may be ſo plain as that any unprejudic'd and reaſonable man may certainly underſtand them. How many* Definitions *and* Axioms, *&c. are there in* Euclid, *in the ſenſe of which men are univerſally agreed, and think themſelves undoubtedly certain of it? and yet the words in which they are expreſs'd, may poſſibly bear another ſenſe. The ſame may be ſaid concerning the Doctrines and Precepts of the H. Scriptures; and one great reaſon why men do not ſo generally agree in the ſenſe of theſe as of the other, is becauſe the intereſts, and luſts, and paſſions of men are more concern'd in the one than the other. But whatever uncertainty there may be in the ſenſe of any Texts of Scripture, Oral Tradition is ſo far from affording us any help in this caſe that it is a thouſand times more uncertain and leſs to be truſted to; eſpecially if we may take that to be the Traditionary ſenſe of Texts of Scripture, which we meet with in the* Decretals *of their* Popes, *and the* Acts *of ſome of their* Councils; *than which never was any* *thing in the whole world more abſurd and ridiculous: And whence may we expect to have the infallible Traditional ſenſe of Scripture, if not from the* Heads *and* Repreſentatives *of their Church?*

This may abundantly ſuffice for the vindication of that Paſſage *which Mr.* S. *makes ſuch a rude clamor about, as if I had therein deni'd the truth and certainty of all Religion; but durſt never truſt the Reader with a view of thoſe* words *of mine upon which he pretended to ground this Calumny. But the world underſtands well enough, that all this was but a ſhift of Mr.* S*'s for the ſatiſfaction of his own Party, and a pitiful Art to avoid the vindication of* Sure-footing, *a Task he had no mind to undertake.*

And yet the main deſign of this Book *which he calls* Faith vindicated, *&c. is to prove that which I do not believe any man living ever denied,* viz. *That what is true is not poſſible to be falſe: Which, though it be one of the plaineſt Truths in the world, yet he proves it ſo fooliſhly, as would make any man (if it were not evident of it ſelf) to doubt of it. He proves it from* Logick, *and* Nature, *and* Metaphyſicks, *and* Ethicks, *&c. I wonder he did not do it likewiſe from* Arithmetick, *and* Geometry, the Principles *whereof,* he * *tells us* are concerned in demonſtrating the certainty of Oral Tradition. *He might alſo have proceeded to* Aſtrology, *and* Palmiſtry, *and* Chymiſtry, *and have ſhewn how each of theſe lend their aſſiſtance to the evidencing of this Truth. For* that *could not have been more ridiculous, than his* † *Argument from the nature of* Subject *and* Predicate, *and* Copula in Faith-Propoſitions; *becauſe forſooth whoever affirms any Propoſition of Faith to be true, affirms it impoſſible to be falſe. Very true. But would any man argue, that what is true is impoſſible to be falſe, from the nature of* Subject, Prædicate *and* Copula? *for be the Propoſition true or falſe, theſe are of the ſame* nature *in both, that is, they are* Subject, Prædicate *and* Copula.

* *Sure-footing* p. 93.

† *Faith vindic.* p. 6, 7, &c.

But that the Reader *may have a taſte of his clear ſtyle and way of reaſoning, I ſhall for* his *ſatisfaction tranſcribe Mr.* S*'s whole Argument from the* nature *of the* Prædicate. *His words are theſe.* Our Argument from the *Copula* is particularly ſtrengthned from the nature of the *Prædicate* in the Propoſitions we ſpeak of; I mean in ſuch ſpeeches as affirm ſuch and ſuch points of Faith to be true. For *True* means *Exiſtent* in Propoſitions which expreſs only the *Anneſt* of a thing, as moſt points of Faith do; which ſpeak abſtractedly, and tell not wherein the nature of the ſubject it ſpeaks of conſiſts, or the *Quid eſt.* So that moſt of the Propoſitions Chriſtians are bound to profeſs are fully expreſt thus, *A Trinity is exiſtent,* &c. and the like may be ſaid of thoſe Points which belong to a Thing or Action paſt; as, *Creation was,* &c. For, *Exiſtent* is the Prædicate in theſe two, only affixt to another difference of time; and 'tis equally impoſſible ſuch Subjects ſhould *neither have been* nor *not have been,* or *have been* and *have not been* at once, as it is that a thing ſhould neither *be* nor *not be* at preſent, or both *be* and *not be* at preſent. Regarding then ſtedfaſtly the nature of our Prædicate [*Exiſtent*] we ſhall find that it expreſſes the utmoſt Actuality of a Thing; and as taken in the poſture it bears in thoſe Propoſitions, that Actually *exercis'd,* that is, the utmoſt Actuality in its moſt actual ſtate; that is, as abſolutely excluding all manner or leaſt degree of Potentiality, and conſequently all poſſibility of being otherwiſe; which is radically deſtroyed when all Potentiality is taken away. This Diſcourſe holding, which in right to truth I ſhall not fear to affirm (unconcern'd in the drollery of any Oppoſer) to be more than Mathematically *demonſtrative,* it follows inevitably, that whoſo is bound to profeſs a *Trinity, Incarnation,* &c. *is or was exiſtent,* is alſo bound to profeſs that 'tis *impoſſible they ſhould be not Exiſtent,* or

P. 9. 10, 11, 12.

which is all one, that 'tis impoſſible theſe points of Faith ſhould be falſe.

The ſame appears out of the nature of *diſtinction* or *diviſion* applied to our Prædicate *Exiſtent*, as found in theſe Propoſitions: For could that Prædicate bear a pertinent diſtinction expreſſing this and the other reſpect, or *thus* and *thus*, it might poſſibly *be* according to one of theſe reſpects, or thus *conſidered*, and *not be* according to another, that is *another way conſidered*: But this evaſion is here impoſſible; for either thoſe diſtinguiſhing Notions muſt be more Potential or Antecedent to the Notion of *Exiſtent*, and then they neither reach *Exiſtent*, nor ſupervene to it as its Determinations or Actuations, which differences ought to do; nor can any Notion be more *Actual* or *Determinative* in the line of *Subſtance* or Being, than *Exiſtent* is; and, ſo fit to diſtinguiſh it in that line; nor, laſtly, can any determination in the line of Accidents ſerve the turn;for,thoſe ſuppoſe Exiſtence already put, and ſo the whole Truth of the Propoſition entire and complete antecedently to them: 'Tis impoſſible therefore that what is thus affirmed to be *True*, ſhould in any regard be affirmed *poſſible to be falſe*: the impoſſibility of diſtinguiſhing the Prædicate pertinently excluding here all poſſibility of divers reſpects.

The ſame is demonſtrated from the impoſſibility of diſtinguiſhing the Subjects of thoſe Faith-Propoſitions; for thoſe Subjects being Propoſitions themſelves; and accepted for *Truths*, as is ſuppoſed, they are incapable of Diſtinction, as ſhall be particularly ſhewn hereafter. Beſides, thoſe Subjects being points of Faith, and ſo ſtanding in the Abſtract, that is, not deſcending to ſubſuming reſpects, even in that regard too they are freed from all pertinent diſtinguiſhableneſs.

The ſame is demonſtrated from the nature of *Truth*, which conſiſts in an Indiviſible; whence there is nothing of *Truth* had, how great ſoever the conceived approaches towards it may be, till all *may-not-bees*, or Potentiality to be otherwiſe, be utterly excluded by the Actuality of *Is* or Exiſtence; which put or diſcovered the light of *Truth* breaks forth, and the dim twilights of *may-not-bees* vaniſh and diſappear.

I have here (Reader) *preſented thee with a Diſcourſe which* (*if we may believe Mr.* S.) is more than Mathematically demonſtrative. *A rare Sight indeed! And is not this a pleaſant Man, and of good aſſurance? I now find it true, which he* * *ſays elſewhere,* That Principles are of an inflexible *genius*, and ſelf-confident too,and that they love naturally to expreſs themſelves with an aſſuredneſs. *But certainly the ſacred* names *of* Principles *and* Demonſtration *were never ſo prophan'd by any Man before. Might not any one write a Book of ſuch* Jargon, *and call it Demonſtration? And would it not equally ſerve to prove or confute? If he intended this* ſtuff *for the ſatisfaction of the People, he might as well have writ in the* Coptick *or* Sclavonian *Language: yet I cannot deny, but that it is very ſuitable to the Principles of the* Roman Church; *for why ſhould not their* Science *as well as their* Service *be in an unknown Tongue? that the one may be as fit to improve their knowledge, as the other is to raiſe their devotion. But if he deſigned this for the Learned, nothing could be more improper; for they are far leſs apt to admire* nonſenſe *than the common People: And I deſire that no man (how learned ſoever he may think himſelf) would be over-confident, that this is ſenſe. I do verily believe, that neither* Harphius *nor* Rusbrochius, *nor the profound* Mother Juliana, *have any thing in their writings more ſenſeleſs and obſcure than this Diſcourſe of his, which he* affirms to be more than Mathematically Demonſtrative. *So that if I were worthy to adviſe Mr.* S. *he ſhould give over this pretence to* Science; *for whatever he may think,his Talent certainly does not lye that way; but he ſeems to be as*

* *Letter of Thanks* P. 1.

well made for a Myſtical Divine, *as any man I know*; *and methinks his* Superiors *ſhould be ſenſible of this, and employ him to write about the* Deiform fund of the Soul, *the* ſuper-eſſential life, *the* method of Self-annihilation, *and the* paſſive unions of nothing with nothing: *Theſe are profound* Subjects, *and he hath a* Style *peculiarly fitted for them. For even in this* parcel of ſtuff *which I have now cited, there are five or ſix* words, *ſuch as* may-not-bees, potentiality, actuality, actuation, determinative, ſupervene *and* ſubſume, *(which if they were but well mingled and diſcreetly ordered, and brought in now and then with a* that is, *to explain one another) would half ſet up a man in that way, and enable him to write as Myſtical a Diſcourſe as a man would wiſh. But enough of this. And I have treſpaſs'd not a little upon mine own diſpoſition in ſaying thus much, though out of a juſt indignation at confident Non-ſenſe.*

It is time now to draw towards a concluſion of this debate. I ſhall only leave with the Reader *a few obſervations concerning this* Book *of Mr.* S.'s, *and his Doctrine of Infallibility.*

Firſt, *That the main drift of his* Book *being to prove that what is true is impoſſible to be falſe, he oppoſes no body that I know of in this matter.*

Secondly, *That in aſſerting Infallibility to be neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, he hath the generality of his own Church his profeſſed Adverſaries. The Church of* Rome *never arrogated to her ſelf any other Infallibility but what ſhe pretends to be founded upon* Chriſt's *promiſe to ſecure his Church always from Error by a* ſupernatural aſſiſtance, *which is widely different from Mr.* S.'s *rational infallibility of* Oral Tradition. *Mr.* S. *ſurely cannot be ignorant, that the* Divines *of their Church (till Mr.* Ruſhworth *and Mr.* White *found out this new way) did generally reſolve Faith into the infallible Teſtimony of the Church, and the infallibility of their Church into our Saviour's Promiſe; and the evidence of the true Church into the* Marks of the Church, *or* the Motives of credibility; *which* Motives *are acknowledg'd to be only* prudential, *and not* demonſtrative. * Bellarmin *ſays, that the* Marks *of the Church do not make it* evidently true, *which is the true Church, but only* evidently credible; and that (*ſays he*) is ſaid to be evidently credible which is neither ſeen in it ſelf, nor in its principles; but yet hath ſo many and ſo weighty Teſtimonies, that every wiſe man hath reaſon to believe it. *Becanus* † *to the ſame purpoſe,* that the Motives of credibility are only the foundation of a prudent, but not of an infallible aſſent. *I know very well that Mr.* Knott *and ſome others would fain perſuade us, that an aſſent* in ſome ſort *infallible, may be built upon* prudential Motives, *which is as abſurd as it's poſſible; but if it were true, yet Mr.* S. *would not accept of this* ſort of *infallibilty; nothing leſs will ſerve him than* demonſtrative Motives, *and ſuch as are* abſolutely concluſive of the thing. Stapleton (*as Mr.* Creſſy *tells us) expreſly ſays, that ſuch* an infallible certitude of Means *is not now neceſſary to the* Paſtors *of the Church, as was neceſſary to the* Apoſtles, *who were the firſt founders of the Church. So that, according to theſe* Authors, *there may be true Faith where neither the means nor the Motives of it are ſuch as to raiſe our aſſent to the degree of infallibility. And this is as much to the full as any* Proteſtant *(that I know of) ever ſaid. Nay, even his* Friends *of the* Tradition, *Mr.* Ruſhworth, *Mr.* White, *and Mr.* Creſſy, *are guilty of the ſame* damnable and fundamental Error, *as Mr.* S. *calls it* *. *For they grant leſs aſſurance than that which is infallible, to be ſufficient to Chriſtian Faith, and that we are juſtly condemn'd if we refuſe to believe upon ſuch evidence as does ordinarily ſatisfy prudent men in human affairs. And particularly, Mr.* Wh. *makes a queſtion whether human nature be capable of infallibility; as I have ſhewn at large by clear and full Te-*

* L 4. de Eccleſ.

† Sum. Tom. 2. partic. de fide c. 1.

* *Letter to his Anſwerer, p.* 5.

ſtimonies out of each of theſe Authors, *in the* Anſwer to Sure-footing †. *Of which* Teſtimonies, *though Mr.* S. *hath not thought fit to take the leaſt notice throughout his* Book; *yet I cannot but think it a reaſonable requeſt, to deſire him to vindicate the* Divines *of his own Church (eſpecially thoſe of his own way) from theſe things, before he charge us any farther with them.* † P. 120, &c.

Thirdly, *That Mr.* S. *by this* Principle, *That infallibility is neceſſary to the true nature of Faith, makes every true believer infallible in matters of Faith; which is ſuch a* Paradox, *as I doubt whether ever it enter'd into any other man's mind. But if it be true, what need then of any infallibility in* Pope *or* Council? *And if this infallibility be grounded upon the nature of Oral Tradition, what need of ſupernatural aſſiſtance? I doubt Mr.* S. *would be loth to preach this Doctrine at* Rome; *I have often heard, that there is an old teſty* Gentleman *lives there, who would take it very ill that any one beſides himſelf ſhould pretend to be infallible.*

Fourthly, *That Mr.* S. *by* his *Principles does plainly exclude from ſalvation the generality of his own Church, that is, all that do not believe upon* his *Grounds. And this is the neceſſary conſequence of his reaſoning in a late* Treatiſe, *entituled,* The method to arrive at ſatisfaction in Religion: *The principles whereof are theſe;* *That* the Church is a Congregation of Faithful; *The* Faithful *are thoſe* who have true Faith; *That*, till it be known which is the true Faith, it cannot be known which is the true Church; *That* which is the true Faith, can only be known by the true Rule of Faith, *which is* Oral Tradition; *And that the infallibility of* this Rule *is* evident to common ſenſe. *And from theſe principles he concludes* * *that* thoſe who follow not this Rule, and ſo are out of this Church, can have no true Faith; *And that* though many of the Points to which they aſſent are true, yet their aſſent is not Faith; for Faith (ſpeaking of Chriſtian Faith) is an aſſent which cannot poſſibly be falſe. *So that the Foundation of this Method is the ſelf-evident infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath been ſufficiently conſider'd in the* Anſwer to Sure-footing, *which yet remains unanſwer'd. That which I am now concern'd to take notice of, is the conſequence of this* Method, *which does at one blow excommunicate and unchriſtian the far greateſt part of his own Church. For if all who do not* follow Oral Tradition *as their only Rule of Faith are out of the Church, and can have no true Faith, then all who follow the* Council of Trent *are* ipſo facto *no Chriſtians. For nothing is plainer, than that that* Council *did not make Oral Tradition the ſole Rule of their Faith, nor rely upon it as ſuch; which hath been prov'd at large in the* Anſwer *to* Sure-footing. * Sec. 21.

But why is Mr. S. *ſo zealous in this matter of infallibility? There is a plain reaſon for it. He finds that confidence, how weakly ſoever it be grounded, hath ſome effect upon the common and ignorant People; who are apt to think there is ſomething more than ordinary in a ſwaggering man, that talks of nothing but* Principles *and* Demonſtration. *And ſo we ſee it in ſome other Profeſſions. There are a ſort of People very well known, who find that the moſt effectual way to cheat the People is always to pretend to* infallible *Cures.*

I have now done with his Infallibility. But I muſt not forget this Letter of Thanks. *I ſhall wholly paſs by the paſſion and ill language of it, which a man may plainly ſee to have proceeded from a gall'd and uneaſy mind. He would fain put on ſome pleaſantneſs, but was not able to conceal his vexation. Nor ſhall I inſiſt upon his palpable ſhuffling about the explication of the Terms* Rule *and* Faith. *He was convinc'd that he had explain'd them very untowardly, and therefore would gladly come off by ſaying that he did not intend* explication, *but only to* prædicate *or* affirm *ſomething of them. And yet the whole deſign of* P. 7.

the firſt page of Sure-footing, *is to ſhew the neceſſity of beginning with the* meaning of thoſe words which expreſs the thing under debate: *And this* method *he tells us he will* apply to his preſent purpoſe, *and will* examine well *what is* meant *by thoſe* words *which expreſs the thing he was to diſcuſs, namely, The* RULE *of* FAITH. *Now if to* examine well what is meant by words, *be not to go about to* explain *them, I muſt confeſs my ſelf to be in a great error. Of the ſame kind is his Apology for his* Teſtimonies, *as if they were* * not intended againſt the Proteſtants; *whereas his* Book *was writ againſt the* Proteſtants; *and when he comes to his* Teſtimonies, *he* † *declares the deſign of them to be, to* ſecond by Authority *what he had before eſtabliſh'd by* Reaſon. *So that if the* Rational part *of his* Book *was intended againſt the Proteſtants, and the* Teſtimonies *were deſign'd to ſecond it, I cannot underſtand why he ſhould ſay* one *was leſs intended againſt them than the* other. *But it ſeems he is ſo conſcious of the weakneſs of thoſe Teſtimonies, that he does not think them fit to ſatisfy any but thoſe who believe him already.*

* P. 105.

† Sure-footing, p. 126.

As to his charge of falſe citations, *it is but the common artifice of the* Roman *Controvertiſts when they have nothing elſe to ſay. However, that the world may ſee how little he is to be truſted, I ſhall inſtance in two or three about which he makes the loudeſt clamour, and leave it to the* Reader *to judge by theſe, of his ſincerity in the reſt.*

P. 62. *He ſays, I notoriouſly abuſe the* Preface *to* Ruſhworth's Dialogues, *in citing the* Author *of it to ſay that* ſuch certainty as makes the cauſe always to work the ſame effect though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working otherwiſe, ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty; *whereas (ſays Mr.* S.) *he only tells us there,* p. 7. that by moral certainty [ſome underſtood] ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe, *&c. To vindicate my ſelf in this, I ſhall only ſet the* Author's *words before the* Reader's *eyes. They are theſe.* This term *Moral certainty*, every one explicated not alike; but ſome underſtood by it ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working other ways. Others call'd that a *moral certainty* which proceeds from, *&c.* A third explication of this word is, *&c.* Of theſe three the firſt ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty, and the Authors conſider'd as miſtaken in undervaluing it. *Is this only to tell us that by moral certainty* ſome underſtood, *&c. Does not the* Prefacer *alſo expreſly affirm, that what theſe* ſome underſtood by moral certainty, ought abſolutely to be reckon'd in the degree of true certainty? *which is the very thing I cited him for.*

P. 65. *Another heavy charge is, that* according to my uſual ſincerity, *I quote* Ruſhworth's *Nephew to ſay, that a few good words are to be caſt in concerning Scripture,* [for the ſatisfaction of indifferent men who have been brought up in this verbal and apparent reſpect of the Scripture,] whereas (*ſays Mr.* S.) in the place you cite, he only expreſſes, it would be a ſatisfaction to indifferent men to ſee the poſitions one would induce them to embrace, maintainable by Scripture. *Does he only ſay ſo? let the Reader judge. The words in Mr.* Ruſhworth *are theſe:* Yet this I muſt tell ye, that it were a great ſatisfaction for indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent reſpect of the Scripture, to ſee that the Poſitions you would induce them unto, can be and are maintain'd by Scripture, and that they are grounded therein. *Certainly one would think that either this man has no eyes or no forehead.*

P. 67, 77. *But the greateſt outcry of all is, that I abuſe his firſt* Demonſtration *by virtue of a direct falſification both of his words and ſenſe, by cogging in the word*

[all,] *making his principle run thus, that* the greateſt hopes and fears are aplied to the minds of [all] Chriſtians. *This indeed I make to be his* Principle *grounded upon his words which I had cited a little before ; and they are theſe,* Firſt, That Chriſtian Doctrine was at firſt unanimouſly ſettled by the Apoſtles in the hearts of the faithful, diſpers'd in great multitudes over ſeveral parts of the world. *2dly.* That this Doctrine was firmly believed by [all] thoſe faithful to be the way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deſerting of it to be the way to damnation ; ſo that the greateſt hopes and fears imaginable were, by engaging the divine Authority, ſtrongly apply'd to the minds of the firſt Believers, *&c. Now if theſe* firſt believers, *to whom he ſays* theſe hopes and fears were ſtrongly apply'd, *be* all thoſe faithful *he ſpoke of before, which were* diſpers'd over ſeveral parts of the world, (*as the tenor of his words plainly ſhews*) *what are theſe leſs than all the Chriſtians of that Age? And he himſelf a little after tells us, there is the ſame reaſon of the following Ages. So that I made his* Principle run no otherwiſe *than he himſelf had laid it. And if it contradict what he ſays elſewhere, it is no new or ſtrange thing. I wonder more at his confidence in charging ſuch* falſifications *upon me as every man's eyes will preſently confute him in. Methinks though a man had all* Science, *and all* Principles, *yet it might not be amiſs to have ſome* Conſcience.

I ſhall only ſpeak a few words to the two ſolid Points, (*as I may call them*) *of his* Letter, *and I have done.*

I had charg'd him that he makes Traditions certainty a firſt *and* ſelf-evident Principle, *and yet that he goes about to demonſtrate it ; which I ſaid was impoſſible to be done, and if it could be done was needleſs. To avoid this inconvenience which he found himſelf ſorely preſs'd withal, he diſtinguiſhes between* Speculative *and* Practical *ſelf-evidence, and ſays that things which are* practically *ſelf evident may be demonſtrated, but thoſe that are* ſpeculatively *ſo, cannot. But he muſt not think to ſhelter himſelf from ſo palpable an abſurdity by this impertinent diſtinction. For let things be* evident *how they will,* ſpeculatively *or* practically, *'tis plain that if they be Principles* evident of themſelves *they need nothing to evidence them ; and if they be* firſt *Principles there can be nothing to make them more evident, becauſe there is nothing before them to demonſtrate them by. Now if Mr.* S. *had in truth believed that the certainty of Tradition was a* firſt *and* ſelf evident Principle, *he ſhould by all means have let it alone, for it was in a very good condition to ſhift for it ſelf ; but his blind way of Demonſtration is enough to caſt a miſt about the cleareſt Truth in the world. But perhaps by the* ſelf-evident *certainty of Tradition, Mr.* S. *only means that it is evident to* himſelf, *for I dare ſay it is ſo to nobody elſe. And if that be his meaning, he did well enough to endeavour to demonſtrate it ; it was no more than needed.*

The other Point is about his Firſt Principles, *ſuch as theſe*, a Rule is a Rule, Faith is Faith, *&c. which he ſays* † muſt principle all that can be ſo- †P. 11:
lidly concluded either about *Rule* or *Faith. Of theſe he hath mighty ſtore, and bleſſeth himſelf in it, as the* Rich man *in the* Goſpel *did in his full Barns,* Soul take thine eaſe, thou haſt *Principles* laid up for many years ; *and out of an exceſs of good nature pities my caſe, who did* undertake to write a Diſcourſe about the Ground of Faith, without ſo much as one Principle to P. 74.
bleſs my ſelf with. *But the miſchief is, that after all this ſtir about them they are good for nothing, and of the very ſame ſtamp with that frivolous one* Ariſtotle *ſpeaks of* [if a thing be, it is,] *which he rejects as a vain and ridicu-* *Analyt. Poſter.* l. 1.
lous Propoſition. Such are Mr. S's firſt Principles, ſurfeited of too much truth (*as an ingenious* Writer *of his own Church ſays of them*) *and ready to burſt with ſelf evidence, and yet by ten thouſand of them a man ſhall not be able to advance one ſtep in knowledge, becauſe they produce no concluſion but themſelves ; whereas*

it is of the nature of Principles to yield a Concluſion different from themſelves. And to convince Mr. S. fully of the foolery of theſe Principles, I will try what can be done with them, either in a Categorical *or* Hypothetical *Syllogiſm, e.g.* A Rule is a Rule, Tradition is a Rule, *Ergo* Tradition is a Rule. *Again,* If a Rule be a Rule, then a Rule is a Rule; But a Rule is a Rule, *Ergo. How is any man the wiſer for all this? But it may be Mr. S. can make better work with them, and manage them more dextrouſly, ſo as to* principle *any thing that can* be ſolidly concluded *in any Controverſy.*

And now I hope at laſt to have given Mr. S. full ſatisfaction; ſince he has brought me to the very point he deſir'd, to acknowledge that I have no Principles. *And indeed if there be no other to be had but ſuch as theſe, I do declare to all the world, that I neither have any* Principles, *nor will have any.*

SERMON

A
TABLE
OF THE
TEXTS to each SERMON.

SERMON I.
JOB 28. 28. *And unto man he ſaid, Behold, The fear of the Lord that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* Page 1

SERMON II.
2 Pet. 3. 3. *Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts.* 34

SERMON III.
Prov. 14. 34. *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation; but ſin is the reproach of any people.* 43

SERMON IV.
Pſal. 19. 11. *And in keeping of them there is great reward.* 50

SERMON V.
Phil. 3. 8. *Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.* 59

SERMON VI.
1 John 5. 3. ——— *And his commandments are not grievous.* 70

SERMON VII.
2 Tim. 2. 19. *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.* 80

SERMON VIII.
Phil. 3. 20. *For our converſation is in heaven.* 90

SERMON IX.
Iſa. 19. 12, 13. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill: for the people turneth not unto him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of hoſts.* 102

SERMON X.
Heb. 3. 13. *Exhort one another daily while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* 111

SERMON XI.
1 Cor. 3. 15. *But he himſelf ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire.* 119

SERMON XII.
Pſal. 119. 165. *Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing ſhall offend them.* 130

A Table of the TEXTS.

SERMON XIII.

Pſal. 119. 59. *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.* Page 140

SERMON XIV.

Pſal. 119. 56. *I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.* 150

SERMON XV.

1 John 3. 10. *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs, is not of God.* 159

SERMON XVI.

Luke 15. 7. *I ſay unto you, That likewiſe joy ſhall be in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons which need no repentance.* 171

SERMON XVII.

Matth. 12. 31, 32. *Wherefore I ſay unto you, All manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men, but the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men:*

And whoſoever ſpeaketh a word againſt the Son of man, it ſhall be forgiven him; But whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. 181

SERMON XVIII.

Acts 10. 38. ——*Who went about doing good.* 190

SERMON XIX.

Luke 9. 55, 56. *But he turned and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of; for the Son of man is not come to deſtroy men's lives, but to ſave them.* 201

SERMON XX.

John 13. 34, 35. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another: By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye love one another.* 215

SERMON XXI.

1 John 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God; becauſe many falſe prophets are gone out into the world.* 209

SERMON XXII.

Heb. 6. 16. *And an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtriſe.* 225

SERMON XXIII.

Luke 20. 37, 38. *Now that the dead are raiſed, even Moſes ſhewed at the buſh, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him.* 241

SERMON XXIV.

2 Cor. 5. 6. *Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilſt we are at home in the body, we are abſent from the Lord.* 260

SERMON XXV.

1 Cor 11. 26, 27, 28. *For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* 271

SER-

A Table of the TEXTS.

SERMON XXVI.

A Diſcourſe againſt Tranſubſtantiation. Page 287

SERMON XXVII.

Joſh. 24. 15. *And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.* 308

SERMON XXVIII.

Joſh. 24. 15. *And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord,* &c. 319

SERMON XXIX.

Jer. 13. 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil.* 331

SERMON XXX.

Mat. 23. 13. *Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites; for ye ſhut up the kingdom of heaven againſt men; and ye neither go in your ſelves, neither ſuffer ye them that are entring, to go in.* 341

SERMON XXXI.

Mat. 25. 1, 2, &c. *Then ſhall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh,* &c. 369

SERMON XXXII.

Ezra 9. 13, 14. *And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs; ſeeing that thou our God haſt puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch a deliverance as this: ſhould we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of theſe abominations, wouldſt not thou be angry with us till thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* 383

SERMON XXXIII.

Matth. 5. 44. *But I ſay unto you, Love your enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* 396

SERMON XXXIV.

Luke 10. 42. *But one thing is needful.* 409

SERMON XXXV.

Matth. 25. 46. *And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal.* 419

SERMON XXXVI.

Eccleſ. 9. 11. *I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong, nor yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all.* 430

SERMON XXXVII.

Jer. 6. 8. *Be thou inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.* 445

SERMON XXXVIII.

Acts 24. 16. *And herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards men.* 457

SERMON XXXIX.

Zech. 7. 5. *Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the prieſts, ſaying,* *When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even thoſe ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* Page 469

SERMON XL.

Pſal. 73. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee.* 482

SERMON XLI.

Jer. 9. 23, 24. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth: for in theſe thing I delight, ſaith the Lord.* 494

SERMON XLII.

Tit. 3. 2. *To ſpeak evil of no man.* 506

SERMON XLIII.

John 1. 14. *The word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.* 523

SERMON XLIV.

John 1. 14. *The word was made fleſh.* 534

SERMON XLV.

John 1. 14. *The word was made fleſh.* 550

SERMON XLVI.

John 1. 14. *The word was made fleſh.* 559

SERMON XLVII.

Heb. 9. 26. *But now once hath he appeared in the end of the world, to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf.* 570

SERMON XLVIII.

1 Tim. 2. 5. *For there is one God.* 583

SERMON XLIX.

Joſh. 24. 15. ——*But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.* 601

SERMON L.

Joſh. 24. 15. ——*But as for me,* &c. 611

SERMON LI.

Prov. 22. 6. *Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* 620

SERMON LII.

Prov. 22. 6. *Train up a child,* &c. 632

SERMON LIII.

Prov. 22. 6. *Train up a child,* &c. 642

SERMON LIV.

Eccleſ. 12. 1. *Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.* 653

The RULE *of* FAITH. *In Anſwer to Mr.* Serjeant. 677

SERMON I.

The Wiſdom of being Religious.

JOB XXVIII. 28.

And unto man he ſaid, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.

IN this Chapter *Job* diſcourſeth of the ſecrets of nature, and the unſearchable perfections of the works of *God*. And the reſult of his diſcourſe is this. That a perfect knowledge of Nature is no where to be found but in the Author of it; no leſs wiſdom and underſtanding than that which made the world and contrived this vaſt and regular frame of Nature can throughly underſtand the Philoſophy of it and comprehend ſo vaſt a deſign: But yet there is a *knowledge* which is very proper to man and lies level to humane underſtanding; and that is the *knowledge* of our Creator and of the duty we owe to him; the *wiſdom* of pleaſing God, by doing what he commands and avoiding what he forbids: This *Knowledge* and *Wiſdom* may be attained by man, and is ſufficient to make him happy. *And unto man he ſaid, Behold, the fear of the Lord that is Wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.*

Theſe words conſiſt of two Propoſitions, which are not diſtinct in ſenſe, but one and the ſame thing variouſly expreſs'd; For *wiſdom* and *underſtanding* are *ſynonimous* words here; and though ſometimes they have different notions, yet in the *Poetical Books of Scripture* they are moſt frequently uſed as words equivalent, and do both of them indifferently ſignify either a *ſpeculative knowledge* of things, or a *practical skill* about them, according to the exigency of the matter or thing ſpoken of. And ſo likewiſe *the fear of the Lord*, and *departure from evil*, are *phraſes* of a very near ſenſe, and like importance; and therefore we find them ſeveral times put together in Scripture: *Fear the Lord, and depart from evil*: Prov. 3. 7.
By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. So that they differ only as Pro. 16 6.
cauſe and *effect*, which by a *Metonymy* uſual in all ſorts of Authors, are frequently put one for another.

Now, *to fear the Lord*, and to *depart from evil*, are phraſes which the Scripture uſeth in a very great latitude, to expreſs to us *the ſum of Religion, and the whole of our duty.* And becauſe the large uſage of theſe phraſes is to be the foundation of my following diſcourſe, I ſhall for the farther clearing of this matter endeavour to ſhew theſe two things:

1. That 'tis very uſual in the Language of Scripture to expreſs the *whole of Religion* by theſe and ſuch like phraſes.
2. The particular fitneſs of theſe two phraſes to deſcribe Religion.

I. It is very uſual in the Language of Scripture to expreſs the *whole of Religion* by ſome eminent principle or part of Religion.

The great Principles of Religion are *knowledge*, *faith*, *remembrance*, *love*, *and fear*; by all which the Scripture uſeth to expreſs the *whole duty* of man.

In the *Old Teſtament*, by the *knowledge*, *remembrance* and *fear* of God.
Pro. 30 3. Religion is called *The knowledge of the holy.* And wicked men are deſcri-
Jer. 10.25. bed to be ſuch as *know not God.* So likewiſe, by the *fear of the Lord*,
frequently in this Book of *Job*, and in the *Pſalms* and *Proverbs*. And,
Then they that feared the Lord ſpake often one to another. And the *fear*
of God is expreſly ſaid to be the ſum of Religion, *Fear God and keep his*
Eccl. 12. *Commandments, for this is the whole of man:* And on the contrary, the
13. Pſal. 36.1. wicked are deſcribed to be ſuch as *have not the fear of God before their eyes.*
Eccl. 12.1. And ſo likewiſe by the remembrance of *God*, *Remember thy Creator in*
the days of thy youth; that is, enter upon a religious courſe betimes:
Pſal. 9.17. And on the contrary, the character of the wicked is, that *they forget*
God; *The wicked ſhall be turned into Hell; and all the Nations that forget*
God. In the *New Teſtament*, *Religion* is uſually expreſſed by *faith* in *God*
and *Chriſt*, and the *love* of them. Hence it is, that true Chriſtians are
ſo frequently called *believers*, and wicked and ungodly men *unbelievers*.
Ro. 8. 28. And that good men are deſcribed to be ſuch as *love God*, *All things ſhall*
Eph. 6.24. *work together for good to them that love God*; and *ſuch as love the Lord Je-*
ſus Chriſt. Now the reaſon why theſe are are put for the *whole of Reli-*
gion, is, becauſe the *belief*, and *knowledge*, and *remembrance*, and *love*,
and *fear* of God, are ſuch powerful principles, and have ſo great an in-
fluence upon men to make them Religious, that where any one of theſe
really is, all the reſt, together with the true and genuine effects of them,
are ſuppoſed to be.

And ſo likewiſe the ſum of all Religion is often expreſſed by ſome *emi-*
nent part of it; which will explain the ſecond phraſe here in the Text,
departing from evil. The *worſhip of God* is an *eminent part of Religion*;
and *Prayer*, which is often in Scripture expreſſed by *ſeeking God*, and *cal-*
ling upon his Name, is a chief part of Religious worſhip. Hence Reli-
Heb. 11.6. gion is deſcribed by *ſeeking God*, *He is a rewarder of them that diligently*
Acts 2.21. *ſeek him:* and by *calling upon his name*, *Whoſoever calleth upon the name of*
the Lord, ſhall be ſaved. And ſo by *coming to God*, and by *departing from*
evil. In this fallen ſtate of man Religion begins with *repentance* and *con-*
verſion, the two oppoſite terms of which, are *God* and *Sin:* Hence it is
that Religion is deſcribed ſometimes by *coming to God*, *He that cometh to*
Heb. 11.6. *God, muſt believe that he is*; that is, no man can be religious, unleſs he
Iſa. 59.15. believe there is a God; ſometimes by *departing from ſin*, *And he that de-*
parteth from evil, maketh himſelf a prey: that is, ſuch was the bad ſtate
of thoſe times of which the Prophet there complains that no man could
be religious but he was in danger of being perſecuted.

II. For the fitneſs of theſe two phraſes to deſcribe Religion.

1. For the firſt, [*the fear of the Lord*] The fitneſs of this phraſe will

appear, if we conſider how great an influence the fear of God hath upon men to make them religious. Fear is a paſſion that is moſt deeply rooted in our natures, and flows immediately from that Principle of ſelf-preſervation which God hath planted in every man. Every one deſires his own preſervation and happineſs, and therefore hath a natural dread and horror of every thing that can deſtroy his Being, or endanger his happineſs. And the greateſt *danger* is from the greateſt *power*, and that is *Omnipotency*. So that *the fear of God* is an inward acknowledgment of a holy and juſt Being, which is armed with an almighty and irreſiſtible power; God having hid in every Man's Conſcience a ſecret awe and dread of his infinite power, and eternal juſtice. Now *fear* being ſo intimate to our natures, it is the ſtrongeſt bond of Laws, and the great ſecurity of our duty.

There are two bridles or reſtraints which God hath put upon humane nature, *ſhame* and *fear*. *Shame* is the weaker, and hath place only in thoſe in whom there are ſome remainders of virtue. *Fear* is the ſtronger, and works upon all who love themſelves and deſire their own preſervation. Therefore in this degenerate ſtate of mankind, *fear* is that paſſion which hath the greateſt power over us, and by which God and his Laws take the ſureſt hold of us: Our *deſire* and *love*, and *hope*, are not ſo apt to be wrought upon by the repreſentation of virtue, and the promiſes of reward and happineſs, as our *fear* is from the apprehenſions of Divine diſpleaſure. For though we have loſt in a great meaſure the guſt and reliſh of true happineſs, yet we ſtill retain a quick ſenſe of pain and miſery. So that fear relies upon a natural love of our ſelves, and is complicated with a neceſſary deſire of our own preſervation. And therefore Religion uſually makes its firſt entrance into us by this paſſion; hence perhaps it is that *Solomon* more than once *calls the fear of the Lord the beginning of wiſdom.*

2. As for the Second phraſe [*departing from evil*] the fitneſs of it to expreſs the *whole duty of man*, will appear, if we conſider the neceſſary connexion that is between the negative and poſitive part of our duty. He that is careful to avoid all ſin will ſincerely endeavour to perform his duty. For the ſoul of man is an active principle, and will be employed one way or other, it will be doing ſomething; if a man abſtain from evil, he will do good. Now there being ſuch a ſtrait connexion between theſe, *the whole of our duty* may be expreſſed by either of them; but moſt fitly by *departing from evil*, becauſe that is the firſt part of our duty. Religion begins in the forſaking of ſin:

> *Virtus eſt vitium fugere, & ſapientia prima*
> *Stultitia caruiſſe*——

Virtue begins in the forſaking of vice; and the firſt part of wiſdom is not to be a fool. And therefore the *Scripture*, which mentions theſe parts of our duty, doth conſtantly put *departing from evil* firſt; *Depart from evil and do good. Ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord.* We are firſt to *put off the old man which is corrupt according to deceitful luſts,* and then *to be renewed in the ſpirit of our minds, and to put on the new man,* &c. *Let him eſchew evil and do good.* To all which I may add this farther conſideration, that the Law of God contained in the ten Com-

Pſ. 34. 14. & 37. 27. Iſa. 1. 16, 17. & 55. 7. Eph. 4. 23, 24. 1Pet. 3. 11.

mandments, conſiſting moſtly of prohibitions, (*Thou ſhalt not* do ſuch or ſuch a thing) our obſervance of it is moſt fitly expreſſed by *departing from evil*, which yet includes obedience likewiſe to the poſitive Precepts implied in thoſe Prohibitions.

Having thus explain'd the *Words*, I come now to conſider the *Propoſition* contain'd in them, which is this:

That *Religion is the beſt knowledge and wiſdom.*

This I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe three ways.

1: *By a direct proof of it.*

2. *By ſhewing on the contrary the folly and ignorance of irreligion and wickedneſs.*

3. *By vindicating Religion from thoſe common imputations which ſeem to charge it with ignorance or imprudence.*

I begin with the direct proof of this: And becauſe Religion comprehends two things, the *knowledge* of the *Principles* of it, and *a ſuitable life and practice*; (the firſt of which being *ſpeculative*, may more properly be called *knowledge*; and the latter, becauſe 'tis *practical*, may be called *wiſdom* or *prudence*) therefore I ſhall endeavour diſtinctly to prove theſe two things.

1. *That Religion is the beſt knowledge.*

2. *That 'tis the trueſt wiſdom.*

1. Firſt, *That it is the beſt knowledge.*

The knowledge of Religion commends it ſelf to us upon theſe two accounts.

1. 'Tis the knowledge of thoſe things which are in themſelves moſt excellent.

2. Of thoſe things which are moſt uſeful and neceſſary for us to know.

Firſt, It is the beſt knowledge, becauſe it is the knowledge of thoſe things which are in themſelves moſt *excellent* and *deſirable to be known*; and thoſe are *God*, and our *duty*. *God* is the ſum and comprehenſion of all perfection. It is delightful to know the *Creatures*, becauſe there are particular excellencies ſcatter'd and diſpers'd among them, which are ſome ſhadows of the Divine perfections: But in *God* all perfections in their higheſt degree and exaltation meet together and are united. How much more delightful then muſt it needs be to fix our minds upon ſuch an object in which there is nothing but *beauty* and *brightneſs*, what is *amiable*, and what is *excellent*; what will *raviſh our affections and raiſe our wonder, pleaſe us* and *aſtoniſh* us at once: And that the finite meaſure and capacity of our underſtandings is not able to take in and comprehend the infinite perfections of God, this indeed ſhews the excellency of the object, but doth not altogether take away the delightfulneſs of the knowledge. For as it is pleaſant to the Eye to have an endleſs proſpect, ſo is it ſome pleaſure to a finite underſtanding to view unlimited excellencies which have no ſhore or bounds, though it cannot comprehend them. There is a pleaſure in admiration; and this is that which properly cauſeth admiration, when we diſcover a great deal in an object which we underſtand to be excellent, and yet we ſee we know not how much more beyond that, which our underſtandings cannot fully reach and comprehend.

And as the *knowledge of God* in his *nature* and *perfections* is excellent and deſirable, ſo likewiſe to know him in thoſe glorious manifeſtations of himſelf *in the works of Creation* and *Providence*; and above all, in that ſtupendious work of the *Redemption* of the world by *Jeſus Chriſt*, which was ſuch a myſtery, and ſo excellent a piece of knowledge that *the Angels* are ſaid to *deſire to pry into it.* 1 Pet. 1. 12.

And as the *knowledge of God* is excellent, ſo likewiſe of *our Duty*, which is nothing elſe but *virtue* and *goodneſs* and *holineſs*, which are the image of God, a conformity to the nature and will of God, and an imitation of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections, ſo far as we are capable: For to know our duty is to know what it is to be like God in *goodneſs*, and *pity*, and *patience*, and *clemency*, in *pardoning injuries*, *and paſſing by provocations*; in *juſtice and righteouſneſs*, in *truth* and *faithfulneſs*, and in a hatred and deteſtation of the contrary of theſe: In a word, it is to know what is the good and acceptable will of God, what it is that he loves and delights in and is pleaſed withal, and would have us to do in order to our perfection and our happineſs. It is deſervedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledge to know the *laws of the Land*, and the *cuſtoms of the Countrey* we live in, and the *will of the Prince* we live under: How much more, to know the *Statutes of Heaven*, and the *Laws of eternity*, thoſe immutable and eternal rules of juſtice and righteouſneſs; to know the will and pleaſure of the great Monarch and univerſal King of the World, and the *Cuſtoms* of that *Countrey* where we muſt live for ever? This made *David* to admire the Law of God at that ſtrange rate, and to advance the knowledge of it above all other knowledge, *I have* Pſal 119. *ſeen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad.* 96.

Secondly, 'Tis the *knowledge* of thoſe things which are moſt *uſeful* and *neceſſary* for us to know. The *goodneſs* of every thing is meaſured by its *end* and *uſe*, and that's the beſt thing which ſerves the beſt end and purpoſe; and the more neceſſary any thing is to ſuch an end, the better it is: So that the beſt knowledge is that which is of greateſt uſe and neceſſity to us in order to our *great end*, which is *eternal happineſs*, and the *ſalvation of our Souls.* Curious ſpeculations, and the contemplation of things that are impertinent to us, and do not concern us, nor ſerve to promote our happineſs, are but a more ſpecious and ingenious ſort of idleneſs, a more pardonable and creditable kind of Ignorance. That Man that doth not know thoſe things which are of uſe and neceſſity for him to know is but an ignorant man, whatever he may know beſides. Now the knowledge of *God*, and of *Chriſt*, and of our *duty*, is of the greateſt uſefulneſs and neceſſity to us in order to our happineſs. It's of abſolute neceſſity that we ſhould know *God* and *Chriſt*, in order to our being happy; *This is* Joh. 17. 3. *life eternal* (that is, the only way to it) *to know thee the only true God, and him whom thou haſt ſent, Jeſus Chriſt.* It is neceſſary alſo in order to our happineſs to know our *duty*: becauſe 'tis neceſſary for us to do it, and it is impoſſible to do it except we know it.

So that whatſoever other knowledge a man may be endued withal, he is but an ignorant perſon who doth not know God, the Author of his being, the preſerver and protector of his life, his Sovereign, and his Judge, the giver of every good and perfect gift, his ſureſt refuge in trouble, his beſt friend or worſt enemy, the preſent ſupport of his life, his hopes in death, his future happineſs, and his portion for ever: who does not know his relation to God, the duty that he owes him, and the way to pleaſe *him* who can make him happy or miſerable for ever: who doth not know the Lord Jeſus Chriſt who is *the way, the truth, and the life.*

If a man by a vaſt and imperious mind, *and a heart large as the ſand up-*

on the Sea-ſhore, (as it is ſaid of *Solomon*) could command all the knowledge of *Nature* and *Art*, of *words* and *things*; could attain to a maſtery in all Languages, and ſound the depths of all Arts and Sciences, meaſure the earth and the heavens, and tell the ſtars, and declare their order and motions; could diſcourſe of the intereſts of all States, the intrigues of all Courts, the reaſon of all Civil laws and conſtitutions, and give an account of the Hiſtory of all ages; could ſpeak of trees, *from the Cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the Hyſop that ſprings out of the wall; and of beaſts alſo and of fowls, and of creeping things, and of fiſhes:* and yet ſhould in the mean time, be deſtitute of the knowledge of *God* and *Chriſt*, and his *duty*; all this would be but an impertinent vanity, and a more glittering kind of Ignorance; and ſuch a man (like the Philoſopher, who whilſt he was gazing upon the ſtars, fell into the ditch) would but *ſapienter deſcendere in infernum*, be undone with all this knowledge, and with a great deal of wiſdom go down to Hell.

2. Secondly, *That to be religious is the trueſt wiſdom*, and that likewiſe upon two accounts.

1. Becauſe it is to be wiſe for our ſelves.
2. It is to be wiſe as to our main intereſt and concernment.

1. *'Tis to be wiſe for our ſelves.* There's an expreſſion, *Job* 22. 21. *He that is wiſe is profitable to himſelf*; and *Prov.* 9. 12. *If thou be wiſe, thou ſhalt be wiſe for thy ſelf*; intimating that wiſdom regards a man's own intereſt and advantage, and that he is not a wiſe man that doth not take care of himſelf and his own concernments, according to that of Old *Ennius*, *nequicquam ſapere ſapientem, qui ſibi ipſi prodeſſe non quiret*, That man hath but an empty title of Wiſdom and is not really wiſe who is not wiſe for himſelf. As *ſelf-preſervation* is the firſt principle of *Nature*, ſo care of our ſelves and our own intereſt is the firſt part of *wiſdom*. He that is wiſe in the affairs and concernments of other men, but careleſs and negligent of his own, that man may be ſaid to be buſy, but he is not wiſe: he is employed indeed, but not ſo as a wiſe man ſhould be: Now this is the *Wiſdom of Religion*, that it directs a man to a care of his own proper intereſt and concernment.

2. *It is to be wiſe as to our main intereſt.* Our chief end and higheſt intereſt is happineſs: And this is *happineſs* to be freed from all (if it may) however from the greateſt evils; and to enjoy (if it may be) all good, however the chiefeſt. *To be happy* is not only to be freed from the *pains* and *diſeaſes* of the *body*, but from *anxiety* and *vexation* of *ſpirit*: not only to enjoy the *pleaſures* of *ſenſe*, but *peace* of *Conſcience* and tranquility of *mind*. *To be happy*, is not only to be ſo for a little while, but as long as may be; and if it be poſſible, for ever. Now *Religion* deſigns our *greateſt and longeſt happineſs*; it aims at a freedom from the greateſt evils, and to bring us to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of the greateſt good. For Religion wiſely conſiders that men have *immortal ſpirits*, which as they are *ſpirits* are capable of a pleaſure and happineſs diſtinct from that of our *bodies* and our *ſenſes*; and becauſe they are *immortal*, are capable of an everlaſting happineſs. Now our *ſouls* being the beſt part of our ſelves, and *eternity* being infinitely the moſt conſiderable duration, the greateſt *wiſdom* is to ſecure the intereſt of our *ſouls* and of *eternity* though it be with loſs and to the prejudice of our *temporal* and *inferior* Intereſts. Therefore *Religion* directs us rather to ſecure *inward peace* than *outward eaſe*, to be more careful to avoid *everlaſting* and *intolerable torment* than

ſhort and *light afflictions which are but for a moment*; to court *the favour* of *God* more than the *friendſhip* of the *world*, and not ſo much *to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, as him who after he hath kill'd, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell:* In a word, our *main intereſt* is to be *as happy as we can*, and *as long as is poſſible*; and if we be caſt into ſuch circumſtances, that we muſt be either in part and for a time or elſe wholly and always miſerable, the *beſt wiſdom* is to chuſe the *greateſt* and *moſt laſting happineſs*, but the *leaſt* and *ſhorteſt miſery*. Upon this account *Religion* prefers thoſe *pleaſures which flow from the preſence of God for evermore*, infinitely before the *tranſitory pleaſures* of this world, and is much more careful to avoid *eternal miſery* than *preſent ſufferings*. This is the *wiſdom of Religion*, that upon conſideration of the whole and caſting up all things together *it does adviſe and lead us to our beſt intereſt*.

II. The *Second* way of *confirmation* ſhall be by endeavouring to ſhew the ignorance and folly of irreligion. Now all that are irreligious are ſo upon one of theſe two accounts: Either, *Firſt*, becauſe they do not believe the foundations and principles of Religion, as *the exiſtence of God, the immortality of the ſoul*, and *future rewards:* or elſe, *Secondly*, becauſe though they do in ſome ſort believe theſe things, yet they live contrary to this their belief; and of this kind are the far greateſt part of wicked men. The *firſt* ſort are guilty of that which we call *ſpeculative*, the *other* of *practical Atheiſm*. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the Ignorance and Folly of both theſe.

Firſt, *Speculative Atheiſm* is *unreaſonable*, and that upon theſe *Five* accounts. 1. Becauſe *it gives no tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world*. 2. Nor *does it give any reaſonable account of the univerſal conſent of mankind in this apprehenſion*, That there is a God. 3. *It requires more evidence for things than they are capable of*. 4. *The Atheiſt pretends to know that which no man can know*. 5. *Atheiſm contradicts it ſelf.*

I. Becauſe *it gives no tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world*. One of the greateſt difficulties that lies in the Atheiſt's way is, upon his own ſuppoſition *that there is no God*, to give a likely account of the exiſtence of the world. We ſee this vaſt frame of the World, and an innumerable multitude of creatures in it, all which we who believe a God attribute to *him* as the Author of them. For a *Being* ſuppos'd of infinite *goodneſs* and *wiſdom* and *power* is a very likely cauſe of theſe things. What more likely to make this vaſt world, to ſtretch forth the heavens and lay the foundation of the earth, and to form theſe and all things in them of nothing, than infinite *power*? What more likely to communicate Being and ſo many degrees of happineſs to ſo many ſeveral ſorts of creatures, than infinite *goodneſs*? What more likely to contrive this admirable frame of the Univerſe and all the creatures in it, each of them ſo perfect in their kind and all of them ſo fitted to each other and to the whole, than infinite *counſel* and *wiſdom*? This ſeems to be no unreaſonable account.

But let us ſee now what account the *Atheiſt* gives of theſe things. If there be no God there are but theſe *two* ways imaginable for the world to be. Either it muſt be ſaid, That not only the Matter but alſo the *Frame* of this world is eternal; and that as to the main things always were as they are without any firſt cauſe of their being; which is the way of the

Ariſtotelian Atheiſt; (thoſe I mean, who proceed upon *Ariſtotle*'s ſuppoſition of the eternity of the world, but yet deny it to be from God, which he expreſly aſſerts) Or elſe the *matter* of the world being ſuppoſed to be eternal and of it ſelf, the original of this vaſt and beautiful *frame* muſt be aſcribed merely to *chance*, and the caſual concourſe of the parts of matter; which is the way of the *Epicurean* Atheiſt. But neither of theſe ways gives a tolerable account of the exiſtence of the world.

1. I ſhall firſt conſider the *Hypotheſis* of thoſe whom for diſtinction ſake I call the *Ariſtotelian* Atheiſts, which is this; That not only the matter but alſo the *frame* of the world is eternal, and that as to the main it was always as it is, of it ſelf; and that there hath been from all eternity a ſucceſſion of men and other creatures without any firſt cauſe of their being.

It ſeems to be very hard, and if that would do any good might be juſt matter of complaint, that we are fallen into ſo prophane and ſceptical an age which takes a pleaſure and a pride in unraveling almoſt all the received principles both of Religion and Reaſon: So that we are put many times to prove thoſe things which can hardly be made plainer than they are of themſelves. And ſuch almoſt are theſe Principles, *That God is*, and *That all things were made by him*; which by reaſon of the bold cavils of perverſe and unreaſonable men we are now-a-days put to defend.

That ſomething is of it ſelf is evident, becauſe we ſee things are. And the things that we ſee muſt either have had ſome firſt cauſe of their being, or have been always and of themſelves. One of theſe two is unavoidable.

So that the controverſy between us and this ſort of Atheiſt comes to this; Which is the more credible opinion, that the world was never made nor had a beginning but always was as it is, and that there hath been from all eternity a ſucceſſion of men and other creatures without any firſt cauſe of their being; or, that there was from all eternity ſuch a *being* as we conceive *God* to be, infinite in power, goodneſs and wiſdom, which made us and all other things; The *firſt* of theſe opinions I ſhall ſhew to be altogether incredible, and the *latter* to have all the credibility and evidence of which a thing of that nature is capable, and ſuch evidence as is ſufficient to convince any impartial and conſiderate man.

Now in comparing the probabilities of things, that we may know on which ſide the advantage lies, theſe two conſiderations are of great moment, What the arguments are on each ſide, and what the difficulties. For if there be fair proofs on the one ſide, and none at all on the other, and if the moſt preſſing difficulties be on that ſide on which there are no proofs: this is ſufficient to render *one* opinion very credible and the *other* altogether incredible.

Theſe *two things* therefore I ſhall endeavour to make good, in the matter that is now under our conſideration. *Firſt*, That there are fair proofs on our ſide, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other. And *Secondly*, That the ſide on which there is no proof is incumbred with the greateſt difficulties.

Firſt, That there are fair proofs on our ſide, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence of proof on the other.

This Queſtion, *Whether the world was created and had a beginning, or* *not ?* is a queſtion concerning *an ancient matter of fact*, which can only be decided theſe two ways; by *teſtimony*, and by *probabilities of reaſon*. *Teſtimony*, is the principal argument in a matter of this nature, and if fair *probabilities of reaſon* concur with it this argument hath all the ſtrength it can have: Now both theſe are clearly on the affirmative ſide of the queſtion, *viz.* That the world was created, and had a beginning.

1. *Teſtimony*; of which there be two kinds, *Divine* and *Humane*.

Divine teſtimony, as ſuch, is not proper to be us'd in this cauſe conſidering the occaſion of the preſent debate: For that would be to beg the firſt and main queſtion now in controverſy, which is, Whether there be a God or not? which a teſtimony from God does ſuppoſe, and therefore ought not to be brought for the proof of it. 'Tis true indeed that thoſe effects of Divine Power, I mean miracles which will prove a divine teſtimony to an infidel, will as well prove the being of a God to an Atheiſt; But when we diſpute againſt thoſe who deny a God no teſtimony ought to be preſum'd to be from God, but muſt be prov'd to be ſo. And whatever argument proves that will alſo prove that there is a God.

Humane teſtimonies are of two ſorts; *univerſal tradition*, and *written Hiſtory*. Both theſe are plainly and beyond diſpute on our ſide.

Firſt, There is an *univerſal tradition* concerning the beginning of the world, and that it was made by God. And for the evidence of this we have the concurring Tradition of the moſt *ancient* Nations, the *Egyptians* and *Phœnicians* *; and of the moſt *barbarous* the *Indians*; who as *Strabo* † tells us, *did in many things agree with the Grecians*, particularly in this, *that the world did begin, and ſhould have an end; and that God the maker and governor of it, is preſent in all parts of it.* And *Acoſta* tells us, that at the firſt diſcovery of *America*, the inhabitants of *Peru* did worſhip one chief God, under the name or title of *The Maker of the Univerſe*: And yet theſe people had not had any commerce with the other known parts of the world, for God knows how many ages.

To which may be added, that the moſt ancient of the Philoſophers, and thoſe that were the heads of the chief Sects of Philoſophy, as *Thales*, *Anaxagoras* and *Pythagoras* did likewiſe conſent to this Tradition. Particularly concerning *Thales*, *Tully* * tells us that he was *the firſt* of all the Philoſophers *that enquired into theſe things; and he ſaid, that water was the beginning of all things, and that God was that mind* (or intelligent Principle) *which faſhion'd all things out of water.* So likewiſe *Strabo* * informs us that the *Brachmans*, the chief Sect of Philoſophers among the *Indians*, agreed with the *Grecians* in this, *That the world was made of water.* Which agrees exactly with *Moſes*'s account of the Creation, *viz. That the Spirit of God moved upon the face of waters*; which St. *Peter* * expreſſes thus, *That by the word of God the heavens and the earth* (for ſo the Hebrews call the *world*) *were of old* ἐξ ὕδατος συνεστῶσα *conſtituted or made of water*; not *ſtanding out of the water*, as our Tranſlation renders it.

Nay *Ariſtotle* * himſelf, who was the great aſſerter of the eternity of the world, gives this account why the Gods were anciently repreſented by the Heathens as ſwearing by the lake *Styx*, becauſe *water* was ſuppoſed to be the *principle of all things*. And this, he tells us, was the *moſt ancient opinion* concerning the original of the world; and that the *very oldeſt Writers of Theology*, and thoſe who liv'd *at the greateſt diſtance from his time*, were of this mind. And in the Book *de Mundo* * it is freely

* Vide *Grot.* de verit. Chr. Relig. *l.* 1.

† Geogr. *l.* 15.

* De Nat. Deorum, *l.* 1.

* Geogr. *l.* 15.

* 2 Pet. 3. 5.

* Metaph. l. 1. c. 3.

* Cap. 6.

acknowledg'd to have been an ancient ſaying, and a general Tradition among all men, *That all things are of God, and were made by him.* I will conclude this with that full Teſtimony of *Maximus Tyrius* * to this purpoſe: *However* (ſays he) *men may differ in other things, yet they all agree in this* Law *or* Principle, *that there is one God, King, and Father of all things,* &c. *This the* Greeks *ſay, this the* Barbarians; *this thoſe that live upon the Continent, and thoſe that dwell by the Sea; the wiſe and the unwiſe.*

* Diſſertat. 1.

Secondly, We have likewiſe a moſt *ancient* and credible *Hiſtory* of the beginning of the world; I mean the Hiſtory of *Moſes*, with which no Book in the world in point of antiquity can contend. I ſhall not now go about to ſtrengthen my argument, by pleading the Divine authority of this Book; for which yet I could offer good evidence, if that were proper to the matter in hand. It is ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe that *Moſes* have the ordinary credit of an Hiſtorian given him, which none in reaſon can deny him, he being cited by the moſt ancient of the Heathen Hiſtorians, and the antiquity of his writings never queſtioned by any of them, as *Joſephus* * aſſures us.

* L. 1 contra *Appion.*

Now this Hiſtory of *Moſes* gives us a particular account of the beginning of the world, and of the creation of it by God. Which aſſertion of his is agreeable to the moſt ancient *Writers* among the *Heathen*, whether *Poets* or *Hiſtorians*. And ſeveral of the main parts of *Moſes*'s Hiſtory, as concerning the *Flood* and the *firſt Fathers* of the *ſeveral Nations* of the World (of which he gives a particular account, *Gen.* 10.) do very well accord with the moſt ancient accounts of *Prophane* Hiſtory. And I do not know, whether any thing ought more to recommend the Writings of *Moſes* to a human belief, than the eaſy and credible account which he gives of the original of the World, and of the firſt peopling of it.

As to the account of ancient times, both the *Egyptian* and *Chaldæan* accounts, which are pretended by ſome to be ſo vaſtly different from that of the *Scriptures*, may for all that be, near the matter, eaſily reconcil'd with it *; if we do but admit what *Diodorus Siculus* and *Plutarch*, very credible perſons and diligent ſearchers into ancient Books, do moſt expreſly aſſure us, *viz.* that both thoſe *Nations* did anciently reckon months for years. And the account of the *Chineſes* is not hard to be reconcil'd with that of the *Septuagint*. Now in ſo nice and obſcure a matter, as the account of ancient times is, it ought to ſatisfy any fair and reaſonable enquirer if they can be brought any whit near one another.

* Vide Dr. *Stillingfleet*'s *Orig. Sac.* where this is fully made out.

So that *univerſal Tradition* and the moſt *ancient Hiſtory* in the world, are clearly on our ſide. And if they be, one can hardly wiſh a more convincing argument. For if the world and conſequently mankind had a beginning, there is all the reaſon in the world to expect theſe two things: *Firſt*, that there ſhould be an *univerſal Tradition* concerning this matter; becauſe it was the moſt memorable thing that could be tranſmitted to poſterity. And this was eaſy to be done, if mankind ſprang from one common root and *original*, from whence this *Tradition* would naturally be univerſally diffus'd. *Secondly*, it may with the ſame reaſon be expected, that ſo remarkable a *thing* ſhould be recorded in the moſt ancient *Hiſtory*. Now both theſe have accordingly happened. But then on the other hand, if the world was eternal and had no beginning there could be no real ground for ſuch a *Tradition* or *Hiſtory*. And if ſuch a Tradition were at any time endeavoured to be ſet on foot, it is not eaſy to imagine how it ſhould at firſt gain entertainment, but much more difficult to conceive how ever it ſhould come to be *univerſally* propagated. For upon the *ſuppoſition* of thoſe who hold the eternity of the world, the world was always peopled; and if ſo, there could be no common head or ſpring from whence ſuch a *Tradition* would naturally derive it ſelf into all parts of the world. So that unleſs all the world was ſometime of one *language*, and under one *Government* (which it never was that we know of ſince it was peopled) no endeavour and induſtry could make ſuch a Tradition common.

If it be ſaid, that this Tradition began after ſome univerſal deluge, out of which poſſibly but one family might eſcape, and that poſſibly too of barbarous people; from whom any fond and groundleſs conceit might ſpring and afterwards ſpread it ſelf as mankind encreaſed. This I ſhall have occaſion to conſider in a more proper place. In the mean time I have ſhewn, even from the acknowledgment of *Ariſtotle* himſelf, that there was anciently ſuch a Tradition concerning the beginning of the world. Nay, if we may believe him, he himſelf was the very firſt aſſerter of the eternity of the world. For he * ſays expreſly, *That all the Philoſophers that were before him, did hold that the world was made.* Thus much for the *firſt* kind of *proof* this matter is capable of, namely, *teſtimony.*

2dly. The *probabilities of reaſon* do all likewiſe favour the beginning of the world: As,

1. The want of any *Hiſtory* or *Tradition* ancienter than what is conſiſtent with the received opinion of the time of the world's beginning; nay, the moſt ancient Hiſtories were written long after that time. This *Lucretius*, the famous *Epicurean*, urgeth as a ſtrong preſumption that the world had a beginning,

> ——*Si nulla fuit genitalis origo*
> *Terrarum & Cæli, ſemperque æterna fuere:*
> *Cur ſupra bellum Thebanum, & funera Trojæ,*
> *Non alias alii quoque res cecinere Poetæ?*

i. e. *If the world had no beginning, how is it that the Greek Poets* (the moſt ancient of their *Writers*) *mention nothing higher than the* Theban *war, and the deſtruction of* Troy? Were there from all eternity no memorable actions done till about that time? Or had mankind no way till of late to record them and propagate the memory of them to poſterity? It is much if men were from eternity, that they ſhould not find out the way of writing all that *long* duration, which had paſt before that Time. Sure he was a fortunate man indeed, who after men had been eternally ſo dull as not to find it out, had the luck at laſt to hit upon it.

But it may be, the famous actions of former times were always recorded, but that the memorials of them have been ſeveral times loſt by univerſal deluges, which have now and then happen'd and ſwept all away, except (it may be) two or three perſons, that have eſcap'd and begun the world again upon a new ſcore. This is the only refuge that the *Atheiſt* hath to fly to, when he is preſt with this and the like arguments. But he cannot poſſibly eſcape this way. For theſe univerſal inundations muſt either be *natural* or *ſupernatural.* If they be *ſupernatural*, (as any man that conſiders well the frame of the world, and how hard it is to

* De Cœlo l. 1. c. 10.

give a natural reaſon of them, would be inclin'd to think) then indeed it is eaſy to conceive how a few of mankind, and no more, ſhould eſcape: Becauſe this will depend upon the pleaſure of that ſuperior Being which is ſuppoſed ſupernaturally to order theſe things. But this is to yield what we have all this while contended for, *viz.* That there is a God. But if they be ***natural,*** which the ***Atheiſt*** muſt ſay, then there is nothing to reſtrain them from a total deſtruction, not only of mankind, but of all the beaſts of the earth. This the ***Atheiſt*** cannot deny, not only to be very poſſible, but exceeding probable; becauſe he grants it to have come ſo near the matter, that but very few eſcap'd, and no doubt with great difficulty. Now it is the greateſt wonder in the world, that a thing (according to their own ſuppoſition) ſo likely to happen, ſhould never have fallen out in an infinite duration. Will any man have the face to ſay that a thing is likely which did never yet happen from all eternity? One would think that not only whatever is probable, but whatever can poſſibly happen ſhould be brought about in that ſpace: So that if mankind had been from eternity it had in all probability, I had almoſt ſaid, been deſtroyed from all eternity, but I may confidently ſay, long ſince ruin'd.

2. Another *probability* of the world's beginning is, the account which we have of the *original of Learning and the moſt uſeful Arts* in ſeveral parts of the world. Now if the world had been eternal, theſe in all likelihood would have been found out, and generally ſpread long ago and beyond the memory of all ages. There are ſome *Arts* indeed that are peculiarly convenient to ſome particular Nations; and others that are only ſerviceable to the humour and faſhion of one or more ages. Theſe are not likely to ſpread, and they may come in, and go out, and return again as often as there is occaſion. But thoſe which are generally uſeful to mankind in all times and places, if they were once found out (and who would not think they ſhould in an eternal duration?) it is not imaginable but that they ſhould have been ſpread innumerable ages ſince: Nor can any man give a good reaſon how they ſhould ever be loſt, but by ſome ſuch accident as an univerſal deluge, which has been ſpoken to already. But now on the contrary, the beginnings of *Learning* and of the moſt uſeful *Arts* in ſeveral Nations, is very well known. And I add farther, that where ever Learning and Civil Arts have come this *Tradition* concerning the ***beginning of the world*** hath been moſt vigorous, and aſſerted with the greateſt clearneſs and confidence.

3. The ſeveral parts of which the world conſiſts, being (ſo far as by thoſe parts of it which we know, we can poſſibly judge of the reſt) in their nature corruptible; it is more than probable, that in an infinite duration this frame of things would long ſince have been diſſolv'd; eſpecially, if (as the *Atheiſt* affirms) there be no ſuperior being, no wiſe and intelligent principle to repair and regulate it, and to prevent thoſe innumerable diſorders and calamitous accidents, which muſt in ſo long a ſpace in all probability have happen'd to it. This *Lucretius* * alſo urges as a convincing proof that the world was not eternal, * L. 5.

Quare etiam nativa neceſſe eſt conſiteare
Hæc eadem; neq; enim mortali corpore quæ ſunt
Ex infinito jam tempore adhuc potuiſſent
Immenſi validas ævi contemnere vires.

It muſt neceſſarily (ſays he) *be acknowledg'd that the world had a beginning; otherwiſe thoſe things which are in their own nature corruptible had never been able, from all eternity to have held out againſt theſe forcible and violent aſſaults which in an infinite duration muſt have happen'd.* Nay, thus much *Ariſtotle* himſelf every where grants, that if the frame of the world be liable to diſſolution, it muſt of neceſſity be acknowledg'd to have had a beginning.

Theſe are ſome of the chief Probabilities on our ſide; which being taken together, and in their united force, have a great deal of conviction in them. Eſpecially if this be added, that there is no kind of poſitive proof ſo much as pretended on the other ſide. The utmoſt that *Ariſtotle* pretends to prove, is, That the world proceeded from God by the way of a natural and neceſſary effect, as light does from the Sun. Which if it be true (as there is no tolerable ground for it) the World indeed would be without beginning, but not of it ſelf. And thus I have done with the *firſt* conſideration I propounded to ſpeak to, *viz. That there are fair proofs on our ſide, and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of; but that there is no pretence or proof on the other.* I proceed therefore to the

Second Conſideration, That the moſt preſſing difficulties are on that ſide on which there is no proof.

Thoſe who deny a God, and hold the world to have been eternal and of it ſelf, have only two things to object againſt us: The difficulties that there are in the *notion of a God, and in making the world of nothing.* To the *firſt* I anſwer: That we attribute nothing to God that hath any repugnancy or contradiction in it. *Power, wiſdom, goodneſs, juſtice* and *truth,* have no repugnancy in them to our reaſon; becauſe we own theſe Perfections to be in ſome degree in our ſelves; and therefore they may be in the higheſt degree that is poſſible in another. The *eternity* of God and his *immenſity,* and his *being of himſelf,* how difficult ſoever they may be to be conceived, yet theſe perfections muſt be granted to be ſomewhere; and therefore they may as well, nay much better, be aſcrib'd to God, in whom we ſuppoſe all other perfections to meet, than to any thing elſe. And as for God's being a *ſpirit,* whatever difficulty there may be in conceiving the notion of a *ſpirit,* yet the *Atheiſt* muſt grant the thing, that there is a being or principle really diſtinct from matter; or elſe ſhew how mere matter, which is confeſſed by themſelves to be void of ſenſe and underſtanding, and to move neceſſarily, can produce any thing that has ſenſe, underſtanding and liberty. As to the *other* difficulty, of *making the world of nothing,* I ſhall only ſay this: that though it ſignify an inconceivable exceſs of power, yet there can no contradiction be ſhewn in it. And it is every whit as eaſy to conceive that ſomething ſhould be caus'd to be that was not before, as that any thing ſhould be of it ſelf; which yet muſt be granted on both ſides; and therefore this difficulty ought not to be objected by either.

But then on the other ſide there are theſe *two* great and real difficulties. *Firſt,* That men generally have always believed the contrary, *viz.* That the World had a beginning, and was made by God. Which is a ſtrong evidence that this account of the exiſtence of the world is more natural, and of a more eaſy conception to human underſtanding. And indeed it is very natural to conceive that every thing which is imperfect (as the world and all the creatures in it muſt be acknowledged in many reſpects to be) had ſome cauſe which produc'd it, ſuch as it is, and determin'd the bounds and limits of its perfection: but that which is of it ſelf and without a cauſe, may be any thing, and have any perfection which does not imply a contradiction. *Secondly*, To aſſert mankind to have been of it ſelf, and without a cauſe, hath this invincible objection againſt it; that we plainly ſee every man to be from another. So that mankind is aſſerted to have no cauſe of its being, and yet every particular man muſt be acknowledged to have a father; which is every whit as abſurd in an infinite ſucceſſion of men, as in any finite number of generations. It is more eaſy indeed to conceive how a conſtant and permanent being, ſuppoſe *matter*, ſhould always have been of it ſelf; and then that *that* ſhould be the foundation of infinite ſucceſſive changes and alterations: But an infinite ſucceſſion of the generations of men without any permanent foundation is utterly unimaginable. If it be ſaid that the *earth* was always, and in time did produce *men*, and that they ever ſince have produc'd one another; this is to run into one great abſurdity of the *Epicurean* way, which ſhall be conſider'd in its proper place.

And thus I have endeavour'd as plainly and briefly as the nature of the Argument would admit, to prove that the account which the *Scripture* gives of the exiſtence of the world, is moſt credible, and agreeable to the reaſon of mankind; and that this *Firſt* account which the *Atheiſt* gives of it, is altogether incredible. And now I expect after all this the *Atheiſt* will complain, that all that hath been ſaid does not amount to a *ſtrict demonſtration* of the thing. It may be ſo. And if the Atheiſt would undertake to *demonſtrate* the contrary, there might be ſome reaſon for this complaint. In the mean time I deſire to know whether when both ſides are agreed that the world is, and that it muſt either have its original from God, or have been always of it ſelf; and if it have been made evident, that on *one ſide* there are fair *proofs* both from *teſtimony* and *reaſon* and as convincing as the nature of the thing is capable of, and no pretence of proof on the *other*; and that the *difficulties* are moſt preſſing on that *ſide* which is deſtitute of proof; I ſay, if this have been made evident, I deſire to know whether this be not upon the matter as ſatisfactory to a wiſe man as a *demonſtration*? For in this caſe there can be no doubt on which ſide the clear advantage of evidence lies, and conſequently which way a prudent man ought to determine aſſent.

I come now in the *Second* place, to conſider the *other account* which another ſort of *Atheiſts*, thoſe whom I call the *Epicureans*, do give of the exiſtence of the world. And 'tis this. They ſuppoſe the matter of which the world is conſtituted to be eternal and of it ſelf, and then an infinite empty ſpace for the infinite little parts of this matter (which they call *Atoms*) to move and play in; and that theſe being always in motion did after infinite trials and encounters, without any counſel or deſign and without the diſpoſal and contrivance of any wiſe and intelligent being, at laſt by a lucky caſualty entangle and ſettle themſelves in this beautiful and regular frame of the world which we now ſee. And that the Earth, being at firſt in its full vigor and fruitfulneſs, did then bring forth men and all other ſorts of living creatures as it does plants now.

This is in ſhort the *Epicurean* account of the original of the world, which as abſurd as it is *Lucretius* * hath very elegantly expreſſed in theſe verſes.

* L. 5.

Sed quibus ille modis conjectus materiai,
Fundarit cælum ac terram, pontique profunda,
Soliſque & lunæ curſus, ex ordine ponam.
Nam certe neque conſilio primordia rerum
Ordine ſe quæque, atque ſagaci mente locarunt,
Nec quos quæque darent motus pepigere profecto:
Sed quia multa modis multis primordia rerum
Ex infinito jam tempore percita plagis
Ponderibuſque ſuis conſuerunt concita ferri,
Omnimodiſque coire, atque omnia pertentare,
Quæcunque inter ſe poſſent congreſſa creare:
Propterea fit, uti magnum vulgata per ævum
Omnigenos cætus, & motus experiundo,
Tandem ea conveniant, quæ ut convenere, repente
Magnarum rerum fiunt exordia ſæpe,
Terrai, maris & cæli, generiſque animantum.

Thus he like a good *Poet*, but a very bad maker and contriver of the world. For I appeal to any man of reaſon whether any thing can be more unreaſonable, than obſtinately to impute an effect to chance which carries in the very face of it all the arguments and characters of a wiſe deſign, and contrivance? Was ever any conſiderable work, in which there was required a great variety of parts and a regular and orderly diſpoſition of thoſe parts, done by chance? Will chance fit means to ends, and that in ten thouſand inſtances, and not fail in any one? How often might a man after he had jumbled a ſet of letters in a bag, fling them out upon the ground before they would fall into an exact Poem, yea or ſo much as make a good diſcourſe in Proſe? And may not a little *Book* be as eaſily made by chance, as this great *Volume* of the world? How long might a man be in ſprinkling colours upon Canvas with a careleſs hand, before they would happen to make the exact Picture of a man? And is a man eaſier made by chance than his Picture? How long might twenty thouſand *blind men*, which ſhould be ſent out from the ſeveral remote parts of *England*, wander up and down before they would all meet upon *Salisbury-plains* and fall into rank and file in the exact order of an Army? And yet this is much more eaſy to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of matter ſhould rendezvouz themſelves into a world. A man that ſees *Henry* the *Seventh*'s Chappel at *Weſtminſter* might with as good reaſon maintain (yea with much better, conſidering the vaſt difference betwixt that little ſtructure and the huge fabrick of the world) that it was never contrived or built by any man, but that the ſtones did by chance grow into thoſe curious figures into which they ſeem to have been cut and graven; and that *upon a time* (as tales uſually begin) the materials of that building, the ſtone, morter, timber, iron, lead, and glaſs, happily met together and very fortunately rang'd themſelves into that delicate order in which we ſee them now ſo cloſe compacted that it muſt be a very great chance that parts them again. What would the world think of a man that ſhould advance ſuch an opinion as this, and write a Book for it? If they would do him right, they ought to look upon him as mad: but yet with a little more reaſon than any man can have to ſay that the world was made by chance: or that the firſt men grew up out of the earth as plants do now. For can any thing be more ridiculous and againſt all reaſon, than to aſcribe the production of men to the firſt fruitfulneſs of the earth, without ſo much as one inſtance and experiment in any Age or Hiſtory to countenance ſo monſtrous a ſuppoſition? The thing is at firſt ſight ſo groſs and palpable, that no diſcourſe about it can make it more apparent. And yet theſe ſhameful beggars of Principles, who give this precarious account of the original of things, aſſume to themſelves to be the men of reaſon, the *great wits* of the world, the only *cautious* and wary perſons that hate to be impoſed upon, that muſt have convincing evidence for every thing, and can admit of nothing without a clear demonſtration for it.

II. *Speculative atheiſm* is unreaſonable, becauſe it gives no reaſonable account of the *univerſal conſent* of mankind in this apprehenſion, *that there is a God*. That men do generally believe a God, and have done in all Ages, the preſent experience of the world and the records of former times do abundantly teſtify. Now how comes this perſuaſion to have gained ſo univerſal a poſſeſſion of the mind of man, and to have found ſuch general entertainment in all Nations, even thoſe that are moſt barbarous? If there be no ſuch thing as God in the world, how comes it to paſs that this object doth continually encounter our underſtandings? Whence is it that we are ſo perpetually haunted with the apparition of a Deity, and followed with it whereever we go? If it be not natural to the mind of man, but proceeds from ſome accidental diſtemper of our underſtandings, how comes it to be ſo univerſal that no differences of age, or temper, or education can wear it out, and ſet any conſiderable number of men free from it? Into what can we reſolve this ſtrong inclination of mankind to this error and miſtake? How come all Nations to be thus ſeduced? It is altogether unimaginable but that the reaſon of ſo univerſal a conſent in all places and ages of the world, and among all differences of perſons, ſhould be one and conſtant. But no one and conſtant reaſon of this can be given, but from the nature of man's mind and underſtanding which hath this notion of a Deity born with it and ſtamped upon it; or which is all one, is of ſuch a frame that in the free uſe and exerciſe of it ſelf it will find out God: And what more reaſonable than to think, that if we be God's workmanſhip, he ſhould ſet this mark of himſelf upon all reaſonable creatures, that they may know to whom they belong, and may acknowledge the *Author* of their beings? This ſeems to be a credible and ſatisfactory account of ſo *univerſal* a *conſent* in this matter. But now what doth the *Atheiſt* reſolve this into? He is not at one with himſelf what account to give of it, nor can it be expected he ſhould. For he that will overlook the true reaſon of a thing which uſually is but one, may eaſily find many falſe ones, error being infinite. But there are *three* which he principally relies upon, *fear*, *tradition*, and *policy of State*. I ſhall briefly conſider theſe.

Firſt, He would make us believe that this apprehenſion of a God doth ſpring from an infinite *jealouſy* in the mind of man, and an endleſs fear of the worſt that may happen; according to that *divine ſaying* of the Poet, which he can never ſufficiently admire,

> *Primum in orbe Deos fecit timor*, ——

Fear firſt made Gods. So that it is granted on both ſides that the *fear* of *a Deity* doth univerſally poſſeſs the minds of men. Now the queſtion is, whether it be more likely that the exiſtence of a God ſhould be the cauſe of this fear, or that this fear ſhould be the cauſe why men imagine there is a God? if there be a God, who hath impreſſed this image of himſelf upon the mind of Man, there's great reaſon why all men ſhould ſtand in awe of him: But if there be no God, it is not eaſy to conceive how fear ſhould create an univerſal confidence and aſſurance in men that there is one. For, whence ſhould this fear come? It muſt be either from without, from the ſuggeſtion of others who firſt tell us there is ſuch a *being* and then our fear believes it, or elſe it muſt ariſe from within, from the nature of man which is apt to fancy dreadful and terrible things. If from the ſuggeſtion of others who tell us ſo, the queſtion returns, who told *them* ſo? and will never be ſatisfied till the firſt Author of this report be found out. So that this account of *fear* reſolves it ſelf into *tradition*, which ſhall be ſpoken to in its proper place. But if it be ſaid that this fear ariſeth from within, from the nature of man which is apt to imagine dreadful things, this likewiſe is liable to inexplicable difficulties. For, *Firſt*, The proper object of fear, is ſomething that is dreadful; that is, ſomething that threatens men with harm or danger; and that in God muſt either be power or juſtice; and ſuch an object as this fear indeed may create: But Goodneſs and Mercy are eſſential to the notion of a God as well as power and juſtice: now how ſhould fear put men upon fancying a being that is infinitely good and merciful? No man hath reaſon to be afraid of ſuch a being, as ſuch. So that the *Atheiſt* muſt join another cauſe to fear, *viz.* hope, to enable men to create this imagination of a God. And what would the product of theſe two contrary paſſions be? the imagination of a being which we ſhould fear would do us as much harm as we could hope it would do us good; which would be *quid pro quo*, and which our reaſon would oblige us to lay aſide ſo ſoon as we have fancied it, becauſe it would ſignify juſt nothing. But, *Secondly*, ſuppoſe fear alone could do it; how comes the mind of man to be ſubject to ſuch groundleſs and unreaſonable fears? The *Ariſtotelian* Atheiſt will ſay, it always was ſo; But this is to affirm, and not to give any account of a thing. The *Epicurean* Atheiſt, if he will ſpeak conſonantly to himſelf, muſt ſay that there happened in the original conſtitution of the firſt men ſuch a contexture of *Atoms* as doth naturally diſpoſe men to theſe panick fears; unleſs he will ſay that the firſt men when they grew out of the earth and afterwards broke looſe from their root, finding themſelves weak and naked and unarmed, and meeting with ſeveral fierce Creatures ſtronger than themſelves, they were put into ſuch a fright as did a little diſtemper their underſtandings and let looſe their imaginations to endleſs ſuſpicions and unbounded jealouſies, which did at laſt ſettle in the conceit of an inviſible *being* infinitely powerful, and able to do them harm; and being fully poſſeſt with this apprehenſion (nothing being more ordinary than for crazed perſons to believe their own fancies) they became religious; and afterwards when mankind began to be propagated in the way of generation, then Religion obliged them to inſtil theſe *Principles* into their Children in their tender years that ſo they might make the greater impreſſion upon them; and this courſe having been continued ever ſince, the notion of a God hath been kept up in the world. This is very ſuitable to *Epicurus* his *Hypotheſis* of the original of men; But if any man think fit to ſay thus, I cannot think it fit to confute him. *Thirdly*, whether men were from all eternity ſuch timorous and fanciful Creatures, or happened to be made ſo in the firſt conſtitution of things, it ſeems however that this *fear* of a Deity hath a foundation in nature. And if it be natural, ought we not rather to conclude that there is ſome ground and reaſon for theſe *fears*, and that nature hath not planted them in us to no purpoſe, than that they are vain and groundleſs? There is no principle that *Ariſtotle* (the great aſſerter of the eternity of the world) doth more frequently inculcate than this, *That nature doth nothing in vain*; and the *Atheiſt* himſelf is forc'd to acknowledge (and ſo every man muſt who attentively conſiders the frame of the world) That altho things were made by chance, yet they have happen'd as well as if the greateſt wiſdom had the ordering and contriving of them. And ſurely wiſdom would never have planted ſuch a vain principle as the fear of a Deity in the nature of man, if there had not been a God in the world.

Secondly, If *fear* be not a ſufficient account of this univerſal conſent, the *Atheiſt* thinks it may very probably be reſolved into *univerſal Tradition.* But this likewiſe is liable to great exception. For, whence came this Tradition? It muſt begin ſome time, it muſt have its original from ſome body; and it were very well worth our knowing who that man was that firſt raiſed this ſpirit which all the reaſon of mankind could never conjure down ſince. *Where* did he live, and *when?* In what *Countrey*, and in what *Age* of the world? *What was his name, or his ſons name, that we may know him?* This the Atheiſt can give no punctual account of: only he imagines it not improbable that ſomebody long ago (no body knows when) beyond the memory of all Ages did ſtart ſuch a notion in the world and that it hath paſt for current ever ſince. But if this *Tradition* be granted ſo very ancient as to have been before all Books and to be elder than any Hiſtory, it may for any thing any body can tell have been from the beginning; and then it is much more likely to be a notion which was bred in the mind of man and born with him, than a *Tradition* tranſmitted from hand to hand through all Generations; eſpecially if we conſider how many rude and barbarous Nations there are in the world which conſent in the opinion of a God, and yet have ſcarce any certain *Tradition* of any thing that was done among them but two or three Ages before.

Thirdly, But if neither of theſe be ſatisfactory, he hath one way more; which altho it ſignify little to men of ſober and ſevere Reaſon, yet it very unhappily hits the jealous and ſuſpicious humour of the generality of men, who from the experience they have had of themſelves and others, are very apt to ſuſpect that every body, but eſpecially their Superiors and Governors, have a deſign to impoſe upon them for their own ends. In ſhort, it is this; that this noiſe about a God is a mere State-Engine and a Politick device, invented at firſt by ſome great Prince or Miniſter of State, to keep People in awe and order. And if ſo, from hence (ſaith the Atheiſt) we may eaſily apprehend how from ſuch an original it might be generally propagated and become univerſally current, having the ſtamp of publick authority upon it. Beſides, that people have always been found eaſy to comply with the inclinations of their Prince. And from hence likewiſe we may ſee the reaſon why this notion had continued ſo long. For being found by experience to be ſo excellent an inſtrument of government we may be ſure it would always be cheriſhed and kept up.

And now he triumphs, and thinks the buſineſs is very clear: Thus it was, ſome time or other, (moſt probably towards the beginning of the world, if it had a beginning, when all mankind was under one univerſal Monarch) ſome great *Nebuchadnezzar* ſet up this *Image* of a *Deity*, and commanded *all people and Nations to fall down and worſhip it:* And this being found a ſucceſsful device to awe people into obedience to government it hath been continued to this day, and is like to laſt to the end of the world. To this fine Conjecture I have theſe four things to ſay:

1. That all this is mere conjecture and ſuppoſition; *he* cannot bring the leaſt ſhadow of proof or evidence for any one tittle of it.

2. This ſuppoſition grants the opinion of a God to conduce very much to the ſupport of government and order in the world; and conſequently to be very beneficial to mankind. So that the Atheiſt cannot but acknowledge that it is great pity that it ſhould not be true, and that it is the common intereſt of mankind, if there were but probable Arguments for it, not to admit of any ſlight reaſons againſt it; and to puniſh all thoſe who would ſeduce men to Atheiſm, as the great diſturbers of the world and peſts of humane Society.

3. This ſuppoſition can have nothing of certainty in it unleſs this be true, *that whoever makes a politick advantage of other mens principles ought to be preſumed to contrive thoſe principles into them.* Whereas it is much more common (becauſe more eaſy, for men to ſerve their own ends of thoſe principles or opinions which they do not put into men but find there. So that if the queſtion of a God were to be decided by the probability of this conjecture, (which the Atheiſt applauds himſelf moſt in) it would be concluded in the affirmative; It being much more likely, ſince Politicians reap the advantages of obedience and a more ready ſubmiſſion to goverment from mens believing that there is a God, that they found the minds of men prepoſſeſſed to their hands with the notion of a God, than that they planted it there.

4. We have as much evidence of the contrary to this ſuppoſition as ſuch a thing is capable of, *viz.* that it was not an *arcanum imperii*, a *ſecret* of *government* to propagate the belief of a God among the people when the Governors themſelves knew it to be a cheat. For we find in the Hiſtories of all Ages of which we have any records, (and of other Ages we cannot poſſibly judge) that Princes have not been more ſecure from troubles of conſcience and the fears of Religion and the terrors of another world, (nay many of them more ſubject to theſe) than other men, as I could give many inſtances, and thoſe no mean ones: What made *Caligula* creep under the bed when it thunder'd? What made *Tiberius*, that great Maſter of the crafts of government complain ſo much of the grievous *ſtings* and *laſhes* he felt in his Conſcience? What made *Cardinal Woolſey* (that great Miniſter of State in our own Nation) to pour forth his ſoul in thoſe ſad words, *Had I been as diligent to pleaſe my God as I have been to pleaſe my King, he would not have forſaken me now in my gray hairs?* What reaſon for ſuch actions and ſpeeches, if theſe great men had known that Religion was but a cheat? But if they knew nothing of this ſecret, I think we may ſafely conclude that the notion of a God did not come from the Court, that it was not the invention of Politicians and a juggle of State to cozen the people into obedience.

And now from all this that hath been ſaid it ſeems to be very evident, that the general conſent of mankind in this apprehenſion *that there is a God* muſt in all reaſon be aſcribed to ſome more certain and univerſal cauſe than *fear* or *tradition* or *State-policy*, *viz.* to *this*, that God himſelf hath wrought this image of himſelf upon the mind of man, and ſo woven it into the very frame of his being that (like *Phidias* his Picture in *Minerva*'s Shield) it can never totally be defaced without the ruin of humane nature.

I know but one *Objection* that this diſcourſe is liable to, which is this; That the univerſal conſent of mankind in the apprehenſion of a God is no more an Argument that *He* really is, than the general agreement of ſo many Nations for ſo many Ages in the worſhip of many Gods is an Argument that there are many.

To this I anſwer, 1. That the generality of the *Philoſophers* and wiſe men of all Nations and Ages, did diſſent from the multitude in theſe things.

They believed but one Supreme Deity, which with reſpect to the various benefits men received from him had ſeveral titles beſtowed upon him. And altho they did ſervilely comply with the people in worſhipping God, by ſenſible images and repreſentations, yet it appears by their writings that they deſpiſed this way of worſhip as ſuperſtitious and unſuitable to the nature of God. So that *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* are far from being able to pretend to univerſal conſent from their having had the vote of the multitude in moſt Nations for ſeveral Ages together. Becauſe the opinion of the vulgar ſeparated from the conſent and approbation of the wiſe, ſignifies no more than a great many Cyphers would do without figures.

2. The groſs ignorance and miſtakes of the *Heathen* about God and his worſhip are a good argument that there is a God; becauſe they ſhew that men ſunk into the moſt degenerate condition, into the greateſt blindneſs and darkneſs imaginable, do yet retain ſome ſenſe and awe of a Deity; that Religion is a property of our natures and that the notion of a Deity is intimate to our underſtandings and ſticks cloſe to them, ſeeing men will rather have any God than none; and rather than want a Deity they will worſhip any thing.

3. That there have been ſo many falſe Gods deviſ'd, is rather an argument that there is a true one than that there is none. There would be no counterfeits but for the ſake of ſomething that is real. For tho all pretenders ſeem to be what they really are not, yet they pretend to be ſomething that really is. For to counterfeit is to put on the likeneſs and appearance of ſome real excellency. There would be no Braſs money if there were not good and lawful money. *Briſtol Stones* would not pretend to be Diamonds, if there never had been any Diamonds. Thoſe *Idols* in *Henry* the ſeventh's time (as Sir *Francis Bacon* calls them) *Lambert Symnell* and *Perkin Warbeck*, had never been ſet up if there had not once been a real *Plantagenet* and *Duke* of *York*. So the *Idols* of the Heathen though they be ſet up in affront to the true God, yet they rather prove that there is *one* than the contrary.

III. *Speculative Atheiſm* is abſurd, becauſe it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of. *Ariſtotle* hath long ſince well obſerved, how unreaſonable it is to expect the ſame kind of proof and evidence for every thing, which we have for ſome things. *Mathematical* things, being of an abſtracted nature are capable of the cleareſt and ſtricteſt *Demonſtration*: But Concluſions in *Natural Philoſophy* are capable of proof by an *Induction* of experiments; things of a *moral* nature by *moral* arguments; and *matters of fact* by *credible teſtimony*. And tho none of theſe be capable of that ſtrict kind of *demonſtration*, which Mathematical matters are; yet have we an undoubted aſſurance of them, when they are proved by the beſt arguments that things of that kind will bear. No man can demonſtrate to me (unleſs we will call every argument that is fit to convince a wiſe man a demonſtration) that there is ſuch an *Iſland* in *America* as *Jamaica*. Yet upon the teſtimony of credible perſons who have ſeen it, and Authors who have written of it, I am as free from all doubt concerning it, as I am from doubting of the cleareſt Mathematical demonſtration. So that this is to be entertained as a firm *Principle* by all thoſe who pretend to be certain of any thing at all: *That when any thing in any of theſe kinds, is proved by as good Arguments as a thing of that kind is capable of, and we have as great aſſurance that it is as we could poſſibly have ſuppoſing it were, we ought not in reaſon to make any doubt of the exiſtence of that thing.*

Now to apply this to the preſent caſe. The being of a God is not *Mathematically* demonſtrable, nor can it be expected it ſhould, becauſe only Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be proved *immediately* by *ſenſe*, becauſe *God* being ſuppoſed to be a pure ſpirit cannot be the object of any corporeal ſenſe. But yet we have as great aſſurance that there is a God as the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of; and as we could in reaſon expect to have ſuppoſing that he were. For let us ſuppoſe there were ſuch a *Being* as an *Infinite Spirit*, cloathed with all poſſible perfection, *that is*, as *good* and *wiſe* and *powerful*, &c. as can be imagined: what conceivable ways are there whereby we ſhould come to be aſſured that there is ſuch a *Being?* but either by an internal impreſſion of the notion of a God upon our minds; or elſe by ſuch external and viſible effects as our Reaſon tells us muſt be attributed to ſome cauſe, and which we cannot without great violence to our underſtandings attribute to any other cauſe but ſuch a *Being* as we conceive *God* to be, *that is*, one that is infinitely *good*, and *wiſe*, and *powerful?* Now we have this double aſſurance that there is a God; and greater, or other than this the thing is not capable of: If God ſhould aſſume a body and preſent himſelf before our eyes, this might amaze us but could not give us any rational aſſurance that there is an *Infinite Spirit*. If he ſhould work a Miracle; this could not in reaſon convince an Atheiſt more than the arguments he already hath for it. If the Atheiſt then were to *ask a ſign in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath*, what could he deſire God to do for his conviction more than he hath already done? Could he deſire him to work a greater Miracle than to make a world? Why, if God ſhould carry this *perverſe man* out of the limits of this world, and ſhew him a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, ſpringing out of nothing, he might ſay that innumerable parts of matter chanc'd juſt then to rally together and to form themſelves into this new world, and that God did not make it. Thus you ſee that we have all the rational aſſurance of a God that the thing is capable of, and that *atheiſm* is abſurd and unreaſonable in requiring more.

IV. The *Atheiſt* is unreaſonable, becauſe he pretends to know that which no man can know, and to be certain of that which no body can be certain of; that is, *that there is no God*, and which is conſequent upon this (as I ſhall ſhew afterwards) *that it is not poſſible there ſhould be one*. And the Atheiſt muſt pretend to know this certainly. For it were the greateſt folly in the world for a man to deny and deſpiſe God, if he be not certain that *He* is not. Now whoever pretends to be certain that there is no God hath this great diſadvantage, he pretends to be certain of a pure *Negative*. But of *negatives* we have far the leaſt certainty, and they are uſually hardeſt, and many times impoſſible to be proved. Indeed ſuch *negatives* as only deny ſome particular mode or manner of a thing's exiſtence, a man may have a certainty of *them*; becauſe when we ſee things to be, we may ſee what they are, and in what manner they do or do not exiſt. *For inſtance*, we may be certain that man is not a creature that hath wings, becauſe this only concerns the manner of his exiſtence; and we ſeeing what he Is, may certainly know that he is not ſo, or ſo. But *pure negatives*, that is, ſuch as abſolutely deny the exiſtence of things, or the poſſibility of their exiſtence, can never be proved. For after all that can be ſaid againſt a thing this will ſtill be true, that many things poſſibly are which we know not of, and that many more things may be than are; and if ſo, after all our arguments againſt a thing it will be uncertain whether it be or not. And this is univerſally true, unleſs the thing denied to be do plainly imply a contradiction; from which I have already ſhewn the notion of a God to be free. Now the Atheiſt pretends to be certain of a *pure negative*, that there is no ſuch being as God, and that it is not poſſible there ſhould be: But no man can reaſonably pretend to know thus much, but he muſt pretend to know all things that are or can be; which if any man ſhould be ſo vain as to pretend to, yet it is to be hoped that no body would be ſo weak as to believe him.

V. *Speculative Atheiſm* is unreaſonable, becauſe it contradicts it ſelf. There is this great contradiction in the denial of a God. He that denies a God, ſays that *that* is *impoſſible* which yet he muſt grant to be *poſſible*. He ſays it is *impoſſible* that there ſhould be ſuch a *Being* as God, in ſaying that *de facto* there is no ſuch *being*. For *eternity* being eſſential to the notion of a God, if there be not a God already it is impoſſible now that there ſhould be one; becauſe ſuch a being as is ſuppoſed to be eſſentially eternal and without beginning cannot *now begin to be*. And yet he muſt grant it poſſible that there ſhould be ſuch a *being*, becauſe it is poſſible there ſhould be ſuch a *being* as hath all poſſible perfection: and ſuch a *being* as this is that which we call *God*, and is that very thing which the Atheiſt denies and others affirm to be. For he that denies a God, muſt deny ſuch a being as all the world deſcribe God to be; and this is the general notion which all men have of God, *that he is a being as perfect as is poſſible*; that is, endued with all ſuch perfections as do not imply a contradiction, which none of thoſe perfections which we attribute to God do, as I have already prov'd.

II. *Speculative Atheiſm* as it is *unreaſonable*, ſo is it a moſt *imprudent* and uncomfortable opinion: And that upon theſe *two* accounts. *Firſt*, becauſe it is againſt the preſent intereſt and happineſs of mankind. *Secondly*, becauſe it is infinitely hazardous and unſafe in the iſſue.

1. It is againſt the preſent intereſt and happineſs of mankind. If *Atheiſm* were the general Opinion of the World, it would be infinitely prejudicial to the peace and happineſs of *humane Society*, and would open a wide door to all manner of confuſion and diſorder. But this I ſhall not now inſiſt upon, becauſe I deſign a particular Diſcourſe of *that* by it ſelf.

I ſhall at preſent content my ſelf to ſhew, how uncomfortable an opinion this would be to particular perſons. For nothing can be more evident than that *man* is not ſufficient of himſelf to his own happineſs. He is liable to many evils and miſeries which he can neither prevent nor redreſs. He is full of wants which he cannot ſupply, and compaſs'd about with infirmities which he cannot remove, and obnoxious to dangers which he can never ſufficiently provide againſt. Conſider *man* without the protection and conduct of a *ſuperior Being*, and he is ſecure of nothing that he enjoys in this world, and uncertain of every thing that he hopes for. He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and eagerly to deſire what he is never likely to obtain. *Man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain.* He courts happineſs in a thouſand ſhapes, and the faſter he purſues it the faſter it flies from him. His hopes and expectations are bigger than his enjoyments, and his fears and jealouſies more troubleſome than the evils themſelves which he is ſo much afraid of. He is liable to a great many inconveniences every moment of his life, and is continually inſecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it ſelf. And beſides all this, after all his endeavours to the contrary, he finds himſelf naturally to dread a *ſuperior Being* that can defeat all his deſigns, and diſappoint all his hopes, and make him miſerable beyond all his fears. He has oftentimes ſecret miſgivings concerning another life after this, and fearful apprehenſions of an inviſible Judge; and thereupon he is full of anxiety concerning his condition in another world, and ſometimes plung'd into that anguiſh and deſpair that he grows weary of himſelf. So that the *Atheiſt* deprives himſelf of all the comfort that the apprehenſions of a God can give a man, and yet is liable to all the trouble and diſquiet of thoſe apprehenſions.

I do not ſay that theſe Inconveniences do happen to all; but every one is in danger of them. For man's nature is evidently ſo contriv'd as does plainly diſcover how unable he is to make himſelf happy. So that he muſt neceſſarily look abroad and ſeek for happineſs ſomewhere elſe. And if there be no *ſuperior Being*, in whoſe care of him he may repoſe his confidence and quiet his mind; If he have no comfortable expectations of another life to ſuſtain him under the evils and calamities he is liable to in this world, he is certainly *of all creatures the moſt miſerable.* There are none of us but may happen to fall into thoſe circumſtances of danger, or want, or pain, or ſome other ſort of calamity, that we can have no hopes of relief or comfort but from *God* alone: none in all the world to flee to, but *Him.* And what would men do in ſuch a caſe if it were not for *God?* Humane nature is moſt certainly liable to deſperate exigencies, and he is not happy that is not provided againſt the worſt that may happen. It is bad to be reduc'd to ſuch a condition as to be deſtitute of all comfort And yet men are many times brought to that extremity that if it were not for God they would not know what to do with themſelves, or how to enjoy themſelves for one hour, or to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable conſiderations under their preſent anguiſh and ſufferings. All men naturally flye to God in extremity, and the moſt atheiſtical perſon in the world when he is forſaken of all hopes of any other relief is forc'd to acknowledge him and would be glad to have ſuch a friend.

Can it then be a wiſe and reaſonable deſign to endeavour to baniſh the belief of a God out of the world? Not to ſay how impious it is in reſpect of God, nothing can be more malicious to men, and more effectually undermine the only foundation of our happineſs. For if there were no God in the world man would be in a much more wretched and diſconſolate condition, than the creatures below him. For they are only ſenſible of preſent pain, and when it is upon them they bear it as they can. But they are not at all apprehenſive of evils at a diſtance, nor tormented with the fearful proſpect of what may befal them hereafter: nor are they plung'd into deſpair upon the conſideration that the evils they lye under are like to continue, and are incapable of a remedy. And as they have no apprehenſion of theſe things, ſo they need no comfort againſt them. But Mankind is liable to all the ſame evils, and many others; which are ſo much the greater, becauſe they are aggravated and ſet on by the reſtleſs workings of our minds, and exaſperated by the ſmart reflections and frettings of our own thoughts: And if there be no God we are wholly without comfort under all theſe, and without any other remedy than what time will give. For if the providence of God be taken away, what ſecurity have we againſt thoſe innumerable dangers and miſchiefs to which humane nature is continually expos'd? What conſolation under them, when we are reduc'd to that condition that no creature can give us any hopes of relief? But if we believe that there is a God that takes care of us, and we be careful to pleaſe him, this cannot but be a mighty comfort to us, both under the preſent ſenſe of affliction, and the apprehenſion of evils at a diſtance. For in that caſe, we are ſecure of one of theſe three things. Either that God by his providence will prevent the evils we fear, if that be beſt for us: Or that he will ſupport us under them when they are preſent, and add to our ſtrength as he increaſeth our burthen: Or that he will make them the occaſion of a greater good to us, by turning them either to our advantage in this world, or the increaſe of our happineſs in the next. Now every one of theſe conſiderations has a great deal of comfort in it, for which if there were no God there could be no ground. Nay, on the contrary the moſt real foundation of our unhappineſs would be laid in our Reaſon; and we ſhould be ſo much more miſerable than the beaſts, by how much we have a quicker apprehenſion and a deeper conſideration of things.

So that if a man had arguments ſufficient to perſuade him that there is no God (as there is infinite reaſon to the contrary) yet the belief of a God is ſo neceſſary to the comfort and happineſs of our lives, that a wiſe man could not but be heartily troubled to quit ſo pleaſant an error, and to part with a deluſion which is apt to yield ſuch unſpeakable ſatisfaction to the mind of man. Did but men conſider the true notion of God, he would appear to be ſo lovely a Being, and ſo full of goodneſs and of all deſirable perfections, that even thoſe very perſons who are of ſuch irregular underſtandings as not to believe that there is a God, yet could not (if they underſtood themſelves) refrain from wiſhing with all their hearts that there were one. For is it not really deſirable to every man, that there ſhould be ſuch a *Being* in the world as takes care of the frame of it, that it do not run into confuſion, and in that diſorder ruin mankind? That there ſhould be ſuch a Being, as takes particular care of every one of us, and loves us, and delights to do us good; as underſtands all our wants, and is able and willing to relieve us in our greateſt ſtraits, when nothing elſe can; to preſerve us in our greateſt dangers, to aſſiſt us againſt our worſt enemies, and to comfort us under our ſharpeſt ſufferings, when all other things ſet themſelves againſt us? Is it not every man's intereſt, that there ſhould be ſuch a Governor of the world as really deſigns our happineſs, and hath omitted nothing that is neceſſary to it; as would govern us for our advantage, and will require nothing of us but what is for our good, and yet will infinitely reward us for the doing of that which is beſt for our ſelves? that will puniſh any man that ſhould go about to injure us, or to deal otherwiſe with us than himſelf in the like caſe would be dealt withal by us? In a word, ſuch a one as is ready to be reconcil'd to us when we have offended him, and is ſo far from taking little advantages againſt us for every failing that he is willing to pardon our moſt wilful miſcarriages upon our Repentance and amendment? And we have reaſon to believe God to be ſuch a Being, if he be at all.

Why then ſhould any man be troubled that there is ſuch a Being as this, or think himſelf concern'd to ſhut him out of the world? How could ſuch a Governor as this be wanting in the world, that is ſo great a comfort and ſecurity to mankind and *the confidence of all the ends of the earth?* If God be ſuch a being as I have deſcrib'd, woe to the world if it were without him. This would be a thouſand times greater loſs to mankind and of more diſmal conſequence, and if it were true, ought to affect us with more grief and horror than the extinguiſhing of the Sun.

Let but all things be well conſider'd, and I am very confident that if a wiſe and conſiderate man were left to himſelf and his own choice, to wiſh the greateſt good to himſelf he could deviſe; after he had ſearch'd heaven and earth, the *ſum* of all his wiſhes would be this, *that there were juſt ſuch a being as God is*; Nor would he chuſe any other benefactor, or friend, or protector for himſelf, or governor for the whole world, than infinite power conducted and managed by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs and juſtice, which is the true *notion* of a God.

Nay, ſo neceſſary is God to the happineſs of mankind, that tho there were no God, yet the Atheiſt himſelf upon ſecond thoughts would judge it convenient that the generality of men ſhould believe that there is one. For when the Atheiſt had attain'd his end, and (if it were a thing poſſible) had blotted the notion of a God out of the minds of men, mankind would in all probability grow ſo melancholly and ſo unruly a thing, that *he himſelf* would think it fit in policy to contribute his beſt endeavours to the reſtoring of men to their former belief. Thus hath God ſecur'd the belief of *himſelf* in the world, againſt all attempts to the contrary; not only by riveting the notion of himſelf into our natures, but likewiſe by making the belief of his being neceſſary to the peace and tranquility of our minds, and to the quiet and happineſs of Humane Society.

So that if we conſult our reaſon, we cannot but believe that there is; if our intereſt, we cannot but heartily wiſh that there were ſuch a Being as God in the world. Every thing within us and without us gives notice of Him. His name is written upon our hearts; and in every creature there are ſome prints and footſteps of him. Every moment we feel our dependance upon Him, and do by daily experience find that we can neither be happy without Him, nor think our ſelves ſo.

I confeſs, it is not a wicked man's intereſt, if he reſolve to continue ſuch, that there ſhould be a God; but then it is not mens intereſt to be wicked. It is for the general good of humane Society, and conſequently of particular perſons, to be *true* and *juſt*; it is for mens health to be *temperate*; and ſo I could inſtance in all other virtues. But this is the myſtery of Atheiſm, men are wedded to their luſts and reſolv'd upon a wicked courſe; and ſo it becomes their intereſt to wiſh there were no God, and to believe ſo if they can. Whereas if men were minded to live righteouſly and ſoberly and virtuouſly in the world, *to believe a God* would be no hindrance or prejudice to any ſuch deſign; but very much for the advancement and furtherance of it. Men that are good and virtuous do eaſily believe a God; ſo that it is vehemently to be ſuſpected, that nothing but the ſtrength of mens luſts, and the power of vicious inclinations do ſway their minds and ſet a *byaſs* upon their underſtandings toward Atheiſm.

2. Atheiſm is *imprudent*, becauſe *it is unſafe in the iſſue*. The Atheiſt contends againſt the religious man that there is no God; but upon ſtrange inequality and odds, for *he* ventures his eternal intereſt; whereas the Religious man ventures only the loſs of his Luſts, (which it is much better for him to be without) or at the utmoſt of ſome temporal convenience; and all this while is inwardly more contented and happy, and uſually more healthful, and perhaps meets with more reſpect and faithfuller friends, and lives in a more ſecure and flouriſhing condition, and more free from the evils and puniſhments of this world, than the Atheiſtical perſon does; however, it is not much that he ventures: And after this life, if there be no God, is as well as he; but if there be a God, is Infinitely better, even as much as unſpeakable and eternal happineſs is better than extreme and endleſs miſery. So that if the arguments for and againſt a God were equal, and it were an even queſtion whether there were one or not; yet the hazard and danger is ſo infinitely unequal, that in point of prudence and intereſt every man were obliged to incline to the affirmative: and whatever doubts he might have about it, to chuſe the ſafeſt ſide of the queſtion, and to make that the principle to live by. For, he that acts wiſely and is a throughly prudent man, will be provided againſt all events, and will take care to ſecure the main chance whatever happens; but the Atheiſt, in caſe things ſhould fall out contrary to his belief and expectation, he hath made no proviſion for this caſe. If contrary to his confidence it ſhould prove in the iſſue that there is a God, the man is loſt and undone for ever. If the Atheiſt when he dies ſhould find that his ſoul remains after his body and has only quitted its lodging, how will this man be amazed and blank'd when contrary to his expectation, he ſhall find himſelf in a new and ſtrange place, amidſt a world of ſpirits, entred

upon an everlaſting and unchangeable ſtate? How ſadly will the man be diſappointed when he finds all things otherwiſe than he had ſtated and determined them in this World? When he comes to appear before that God whom he hath denied and againſt whom he hath ſpoken as deſpightful things as he could, who can imagine the pale and guilty looks of this man and how he will ſhiver and tremble *for the fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majeſty?* How will he be ſurprized with terrors on every ſide, to find himſelf thus unexpectedly and irrecoverably plunged into a ſtate of ruin and deſperation? And thus things may happen for all this man's confidence now. For our belief or disbelief of a thing does not alter the nature of the thing. We cannot fancy things into being or make them vaniſh into nothing by the ſtubborn confidence of our imaginations. Things are as ſullen as we are, and will be what they are whatever we think of them. And if there be a God a man cannot by an obſtinate disbelief of him make him ceaſe to be, any more than a man can put out the Sun by winking.

And thus I have as briefly and clearly as I could endeavoured to ſhew the *ignorance* and *folly* of *ſpeculative Atheiſm* in denying the *exiſtence of God.* And now it will be leſs needful to ſpeak of the other *two principles* of *Religion,* the *immortality of the ſoul,* and *future rewards.* For no man can have any reaſonable ſcruple about *theſe,* who believes that there is a God. Becauſe no man that owns the exiſtence of an *infinite ſpirit* can doubt of the poſſibility of a *finite ſpirit,* that is, ſuch a thing as is *immaterial* and does not contain any principle of *corruption* in itſelf. And there is no man that believes the goodneſs of God, but muſt be inclin'd to think that he hath made ſome things for as long a duration as they are capable of. Nor can any man, that acknowledgeth the *holy* and *juſt* providence of God, and that he loves righteouſneſs and hates iniquity, and that he is a *Magiſtrate* and *Governor* of the World, and conſequently concerned to countenance the obedience, and to puniſh the violation of his Laws; and that does withal conſider the promiſcuous diſpenſations many times of God's Providence in this world; I ſay, no man that acknowledges all this, can think it unreaſonable to conclude, that after this life good men ſhall be rewarded, and ſinners puniſhed. I have done with the *firſt* ſort of irreligious perſons, the *ſpeculative Atheiſt.* I ſhall ſpeak but briefly of the other.

Secondly, The *practical Atheiſt,* who is wicked and irreligious, notwithſtanding he does in ſome ſort believe that there is a God, and a future ſtate, he is likewiſe guilty of prodigious folly. The *principle* of the *ſpeculative Atheiſt* argues more *ignorance,* but the *practice* of the *other* argues greater *folly.* Not to believe a God, and another life, for which there is ſo much evidence of reaſon is great ignorance and folly; but 'tis the higheſt madneſs when a man does believe theſe things to live as if he did not believe them: When a Man does not doubt but that there is a God, and that according as he demeans himſelf towards him he will make him happy or miſerable for ever, yet to live ſo as if he were certain of the contrary, and as no man in reaſon can live but he that is well aſſured that there is no God. It was a ſhrewd ſaying of the old *Monk* that two kind of Priſons would ſerve for all offenders in the world, an *Inquiſition* and a *Bedlam:* If any man ſhould deny the being of a God and the immortality of the ſoul, ſuch a one ſhould be put into the firſt of theſe the *Inquiſition,* as being a deſperate *Heretick;* but if any man ſhould profeſs to believe theſe things, and yet allow himſelf in any known wickedneſs, ſuch a one ſhould be put into *Bedlam;* becauſe there cannot be a greater folly and madneſs than for a man in matters of greateſt moment and concernment to act againſt his beſt reaſon and underſtanding, and by his life to contradict his belief. Such a man does periſh with his eyes open, and knowingly undoes himſelf; he runs upon the greateſt dangers which he clearly ſees to be before him, and precipitates himſelf into thoſe evils which he profeſſes to believe to be real and intolerable; and wilfully neglects the obtaining of that unſpeakable good and happineſs which he is perſuaded is certain and attainable. Thus much for the *ſecond* way of Confirmation.

III. The *third* way of confirmation ſhall be, by endeavouring to vindicate Religion from thoſe common *imputations* which ſeem to charge it with *ignorance* or *imprudence*. And they are chiefly theſe three:

1. *Credulity.*
2. *Singularity.*
3. *Making a Fooliſh Bargain.*

Firſt, *Credulity*: Say they, the foundation of Religion is the belief of thoſe things for which we have no ſufficient reaſon, and conſequently of which we can have no good aſſurance; as the belief of *a God*, and of *a future ſtate* after this life; things which we never ſaw, nor did experience, nor ever ſpoke with any body that did. Now it ſeems to argue too great a forwardneſs and eaſineſs of belief to aſſent to any thing upon inſufficient grounds.

To this I anſwer,

1. That if there be ſuch a Being as a God, and ſuch a thing as a future ſtate after this life, it cannot (as I ſaid before) in reaſon be expected that we ſhould have the evidence of ſenſe for ſuch things: For he that believes a God, believes ſuch a Being as hath all perfections, among which this is one, that he is a ſpirit; and conſequently that he is inviſible, and cannot be ſeen. He likewiſe that believes another life after this, profeſſeth to believe a ſtate of which in this life we have no trial and experience. Beſides, if this were a good objection, that no man ever ſaw theſe things, it ſtrikes at the Atheiſt as well as us. For no man ever ſaw the World to be from eternity; nor *Epicurus* his *Atoms*, of which notwithſtanding he believes the World was made.

2. We have the beſt evidence for theſe things which they are capable of at preſent, ſuppoſing they were.

3. Thoſe who deny theſe *principles*, muſt be much more credulous, that is, believe things upon incomparably leſs evidence of reaſon. The *Atheiſt* looks upon all that are religious as a company of credulous fools. But *he*, for his part, pretends to be wiſer than to believe any thing for company; he cannot entertain things upon thoſe ſlight grounds which move other men; if you would win his aſſent to any thing, you muſt give him a clear demonſtration for it. Now there's no way to deal with this *man of reaſon*, this rigid exactor of ſtrict demonſtration for things which are not capable of it, but by ſhewing him that he is an hundred times more credulous, that he begs more principles, takes more things for granted without offering to prove them, and aſſents to more ſtrange concluſions upon weaker grounds, than thoſe whom he ſo much accuſeth of credulity.

And to evidence this, I ſhall briefly give you an account of the Atheiſt's *Creed*, and preſent you with a Catalogue of the *fundamental Articles* of his Faith. *He believes* that there is no God, nor poſſibly can be, and conſequently that the wiſe as well as unwiſe of all ages have been miſtaken, except himſelf and a few more. *He* believes that either all the world have been frighted with an apparition of their own fancy, or that they have moſt unnaturally conſpired together to cozen themſelves; or that this notion of a God is a trick of policy, tho the greateſt Princes and Politicians do not at this day know ſo much, nor have done time out of mind. *He* believes, either that the Heavens and the Earth and all things in them had no Original cauſe of their being, or elſe that they were made by chance and happened he knows not how to be as they are; and that in this laſt ſhuffling of matter all things have by great good fortune fallen out as happily and as regularly as if the greateſt wiſdom had contriv'd them, but yet he is reſolv'd to believe that there was no wiſdom in the contrivance of them. He believes, that *matter* of it ſelf is utterly void of all *ſenſe*, *underſtanding* and *liberty*; but for all that he is of opinion that the parts of matter may now and then happen to be ſo conveniently diſpos'd, as to have all theſe qualities, and moſt dextrouſly to perform all thoſe *fine* and *free operations* which the ignorant attribute to Spirits.

This is the ſum of his belief. And it is a wonder, that there ſhould be found any perſon pretending to reaſon or wit that can aſſent to ſuch a heap of abſurdities, which are ſo groſs and palpable that they may be felt. So that if every man had his due, it will certainly fall to the Atheiſt's ſhare to be the moſt credulous perſon, that is, to believe things upon the ſlighteſt reaſons. For he does not pretend to prove any thing of all this, only he finds himſelf, he knows not why, inclin'd to believe ſo and to laugh at thoſe that do not.

II. The *ſecond imputation* is *ſingularity*; the affectation whereof is unbecoming a wiſe man. To this charge I anſwer,

I. If by *Religion* be meant the *belief* of the *principles* of Religion, that there is *a God*, and *a providence*, that *our ſouls are immortal*, and that there *are rewards* to be expected after this life; theſe are ſo far from being *ſingular* opinions, that they are and always have been the *general* opinion of mankind, even of the moſt *barbarous* Nations. Inſomuch, that the Hiſtories of ancient times do hardly furniſh us with the names of above five or ſix perſons who denied a God. And *Lucretius* acknowledgeth that *Epicurus* was the firſt who did oppoſe thoſe great *foundations* of Religion, the *providence* of God, and the *immortality* of the ſoul. *Primum Grajus homo*, &c. meaning *Epicurus*.

2. If by Religion be meant a living up to thoſe principles, that is, to act conformably to our beſt reaſon and underſtanding, and to live as it does become thoſe who do believe a God and a future ſtate; this is acknowledged, even by thoſe who live otherwiſe, to be the part of every wiſe man; and the contrary to be the very *madneſs of folly*, and height of diſtraction: Nothing being more ordinary than for men who live wickedly to acknowledge that they ought to do otherwiſe.

3. Though according to the common courſe and practice of the world it be ſomewhat *ſingular* for men truly and throughly to live up to the principles of their *Religion*, yet *ſingularity* in this matter is ſo far from being a reflection upon any man's prudence that it is a *ſingular* commendation of it. In two caſes *ſingularity* is very commendable.

1. When there is a neceſſity of it in order to a man's greateſt intereſt and happineſs. I think it to be a reaſonable account for any man to give why he does not live as the greateſt part of the World do, that he has no mind to dye as they do and to periſh with them; he is not diſpoſed to be a fool and to be miſerable for company; he has no inclination to have his laſt end like theirs *who know not God, and obey not the goſpel of his Son, and ſhall be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

2. It is very commendable to be *ſingular* in any *excellency*, and I have ſhewn that *Religion* is the greateſt *excellency*: to be *ſingular* in any thing that is wiſe, and worthy, and excellent, is not a diſparagement, but a praiſe: every man would chuſe to be thus *ſingular*.

III. The *third imputation* is, that *Religion* is *a fooliſh bargain*; becauſe they who are religious hazard the parting with a preſent and certain happineſs for that which is future and uncertain. To this I anſwer.

1. Let it be granted, that the aſſurance which we have of future rewards falls ſhort of the evidence of ſenſe. For I doubt not, but that ſaying of our *Saviour, Bleſſed is he who hath believed, and not ſeen*; and thoſe expreſſions of the *Apoſtle, we walk by faith and not by ſight*, and *faith is the evidence of things not ſeen*, are intended by way of abatement and diminution to the evidence of Faith, and do ſignify that the report and teſtimony of others is not ſo great evidence as that of our own ſenſes: And tho we have ſufficient aſſurance of another ſtate, yet no man can think we have ſo great evidence as if we our ſelves had been in the other world and ſeen how all things are there.

2. We have ſufficient aſſurance of theſe things, and ſuch as may beget in us a well-grounded confidence, and frees us from all doubts of the contrary, and perſuade a reaſonable man to venture his greateſt intereſts in this world upon the ſecurity that he hath of another: For,

1. We have as much aſſurance of theſe things as things future and at a diſtance are capable of, and he is a very unreaſonable man that would deſire more: Future and inviſible things are not capable of the evidence of ſenſe; but we have the greateſt rational evidence for them, and in this every reaſonable man ought to reſt ſatisfied.

2. We have as much as is abundantly ſufficient to juſtify every man's diſcretion, who for the great and eternal things of another world hazards or parts with the poor and tranſitory things of this life. And for the clearing of this it will be worth our conſidering, that the greateſt affairs of this world, and the moſt important concernments of this life are all conducted only by *moral* demonſtrations. Men every day venture their lives and eſtates only upon *moral* aſſurance. For inſtance, men who never were at the *Eaſt* or *Weſt-Indies*, or in *Turky* or *Spain*, yet do venture their whole eſtate in traffick thither, tho they have no *Mathematical demonſtration* but only *moral aſſurance* that there are ſuch places. Nay which is more, men every day eat and drink, tho I think no man can demonſtrate out of *Euclid* or *Apollonius*, that his *Baker* or *Brewer*, or *Cook* have not conveyed poyſon into his meat or drink. And that man that would be ſo wiſe and cautious as not to eat or drink till he could demonſtrate this to himſelf, I know no other remedy for him but that in great gravity and wiſdom he muſt dye for fear of death. And for any man to urge that tho men in temporal affairs proceed upon moral aſſurance, yet there is greater aſſurance required to make men ſeek Heaven and avoid Hell, ſeems to me to be highly unreaſonable. For ſuch an aſſurance of things as will make men circumſpect and careful to avoid a leſſer danger ought in all reaſon to awaken men much more to the avoiding of a greater, ſuch an aſſurance as will ſharpen mens deſires and quicken their endeavours for the obtaining of a leſſer good ought in all reaſon to animate men more powerfully and to inſpire them with a greater vigor and induſtry in the purſuit of that which is infinitely greater. For why the ſame aſſurance ſhould not operate as well in a great danger as in a leſs, in a great good as in a ſmall and inconſiderable one, I can ſee no reaſon; unleſs men will ſay, that the greatneſs of an evil danger is an encouragement to men to run upon it, and that the greatneſs of any good and happineſs ought in reaſon to diſhearten men from the purſuit of it.

And now I think I may with reaſon intreat ſuch as are atheiſtically inclined, to conſider theſe things ſeriouſly and impartially; and if there be weight in theſe conſiderations which I have offered to them to ſway with reaſonable men, I would beg of ſuch that they would not ſuffer themſelves to be byaſſed by prejudice or paſſion, or the intereſt of any luſt or worldly advantage, to a contrary perſuaſion.

Firſt, I would intreat them ſeriouſly and diligently to conſider theſe things, becauſe they are of ſo great moment and concernment to every man. If any thing in the world deſerve our ſerious ſtudy and conſideration, theſe principles of Religion do. For what can import us more to be ſatisfied in than whether there be a God, or not? whether our Souls ſhall periſh with our bodies, or be immortal and ſhall continue for ever? And if ſo, whether in that eternal ſtate which remains for men after this life, they ſhall not be happy or miſerable for ever according as they have demeaned themſelves in this world? If theſe things be ſo, they are of infinite conſequence to us; and therefore it highly concerns us to enquire diligently about them, and to ſatisfy our minds concerning them one way or other. For theſe are not matters to be ſlightly and ſuperficially thought upon, much leſs (as the way of atheiſtical men is) to be play'd and jeſted withal. There is no greater argument of a light and inconſiderate perſon, than profanely to ſcoff at Religion. It is a ſign that that man hath no regard to himſelf, and that he is not touched with a ſenſe of his own intereſt, who loves to be jeſting with edg'd tools and to play with life and death. This is the very mad-man that *Solomon* ſpeaks of, *who caſteth firebrands, arrows and death, and ſaith, Am I not in ſport?* To examine ſeverely and debate ſeriouſly the principles of Religion, is a thing worthy of a wiſe man; but if any man ſhall turn Religion into raillery, and think to confute it by two or three bold jeſts, this man doth not render Religion, but himſelf ridiculous, in the opinion of all conſiderate men; becauſe he ſports with his own life. If the principles of Religion were doubtful and uncertain, yet they concern us ſo nearly that we ought to be ſerious in the examination of them. And tho they were never ſo clear and evident, yet they may be made ridiculous by vain and frothy men; as the graveſt and wiſeſt perſon in the world may be abuſed by being put into a *fool's coat*, and the moſt noble and excellent Poem may be debaſed and made vile by being turn'd into *burleſque*. But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more largely in my next diſcourſe.

Prov. 26. 18.

So that it concerns every man, that would not trifle away his ſoul and fool himſelf into irrecoverable miſery, with the greateſt ſeriouſneſs to enquire into theſe matters whether they be ſo or not, and patiently to conſider the arguments which are brought for them. For many have miſcarried about theſe things, not becauſe there is not reaſon and evidence enough for them, but becauſe they have not had patience enough to conſider them.

Secondly, Conſider theſe things impartially. All wicked men are of a party againſt Religion. Some luſt or intereſt engageth them againſt it. Hence it comes to paſs that they are apt to ſlight the ſtrongeſt arguments that can be brought for it, and to cry up very weak ones againſt it. Men do generally and without difficulty aſſent to *Mathematical* truths, becauſe it is no bodies intereſt to deny them; but men are ſlow to believe *moral* and *divine* Truths, becauſe by their luſts and intereſt they are prejudic'd againſt them. And therefore you may obſerve that the more virtuouſly any man lives, and the leſs he is inſlav'd to any luſt, the more ready he is to entertain the principles of Religion.

Therefore when you are examining theſe matters, do not take into conſideration any ſenſual or worldly intereſt, but deal clearly and impartially with your ſelves. Let not temporal and little advantages ſway you againſt a greater and more durable intereſt. Think thus with your ſelves, that you have not the making of things true or falſe, but that the truth and exiſtence of things is already fix'd and ſettled, and that the principles of Religion are already either determinately true or falſe before you think of them, either there is a God, or there is not; either your Souls are Immortal, or they are not; one of theſe is certain and neceſſary, and is not now to be altered; the truth of things will not comply with our conceits, and bend it ſelf to our intereſts. Therefore do not think what you would have to be, but conſider impartially what is, and (if it be) will be whether you will or no. Do not reaſon thus: I would fain be wicked and therefore it is my intereſt that there ſhould be no God, nor no life after this; and therefore I will endeavour to prove that there is no ſuch thing, and will ſhew all the favour I can to that *ſide* of the *queſtion*; I will bend my underſtanding and wit to ſtrengthen the negative, and will ſtudy to make it as true as I can. This is fond, becauſe it is the way to cheat thy ſelf; and that we may do as often as we pleaſe, but the nature of things will not be impoſed upon. If then thou be as wiſe as thou oughteſt to be, thou wilt reaſon thus with thy ſelf; my higheſt intereſt is not to be deceived about theſe matters, therefore ſetting aſide all other conſiderations I will endeavour to know the truth and yield to that.

And now it is time to draw towards a concluſion of this long diſcourſe. And that which I have all this while been endeavouring to convince men of and to perſuade them to, is no other but what God himſelf doth particularly recommend to us as proper for *humane* conſideration, *unto man he ſaid, behold the fear of the Lord that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* Whoever pretends to reaſon, and calls himſelf a *man*, is oblig'd to acknowledge God and to demean himſelf religiouſly towards him. For God is to the underſtanding of man as the light of the Sun is to our eyes, the firſt and the maineſt and the moſt glorious object of it. He fills Heaven and earth, and every thing in them does repreſent him to us. Which way ſoever we turn our ſelves, we are encountred with clear evidences and ſenſible demonſtrations of a Deity. For (as the *Apoſtle* reaſons) *The inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead:* εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἀυτοὺς ἀναπολογήτους, *ſo that they are without excuſe*; that is, thoſe men that know not God have no apology to make for themſelves. Or if men do know and believe that there is ſuch a being as God, not to conſider the proper conſequences of ſuch a Principle, not to demean our ſelves towards him as becomes our relation to him and dependance upon him and the duty which we naturally owe him, this is great ſtupidity and inconſiderateneſs.

Rom: 1. 20.

And yet he that conſiders the lives and actions of the greateſt part of men would verily think that they underſtood nothing of all this. Therefore the *Scripture* repreſents wicked men as without underſtanding. *It is a nation void of counſel, neither is there any underſtanding in them*: and elſewhere, *have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* Not that they are deſtitute of the natural faculty of underſtanding, but they do not uſe it as they ought; they are not blind but they wink, *they detain the truth of God in unrighteouſneſs, and though they know God, yet they do not glorify him as God*, nor ſuffer the apprehenſions of him to have a due influence upon their hearts and lives.

Deut. 32. 28.
Pſal. 14. 4.

Men generally ſtand very much upon the credit and reputation of their underſtandings, and of all things in the world hate to be accounted fools, becauſe it is ſo great a reproach. The beſt way to avoid this imputation and to bring off the credit of our underſtandings is to be truly religious, *to fear the Lord, and to depart from evil.* For certainly there is no ſuch imprudent perſon as he that neglects God and his ſoul, and is careleſs and ſlothful about his everlaſting concernments; becauſe this man acts contrary to his trueſt reaſon and beſt intereſt; he neglects his own ſafety, and is active to procure his own ruin; he flies from happineſs and runs away from it as faſt as he can, but purſues miſery, and makes haſte to be undone. Hence it is that *Solomon* does all along in the *Proverbs* give the title of *fool* to a wicked man, as if it were his proper name and the fitteſt character of him, becauſe he is ſo eminently ſuch: There is no fool to the ſinner, who every moment ventures his Soul, and lays his everlaſting intereſt at the ſtake. Every time a man provokes God he does the greateſt miſchief to himſelf that can be imagined. A mad man that cuts himſelf and tears his own fleſh and daſhes his head againſt the ſtones does not act ſo unreaſonably as he, becauſe he is not ſo ſenſible of what he does. Wickedneſs is a kind of *voluntary* frenzy and a *choſen* diſtraction, and every ſinner does wilder and more extravagant things than any man can do that is craz'd and out of his wits, only with this ſad difference that he knows better what he does. For to them who believe another life after this, an eternal ſtate of happineſs or miſery in another world, (which is but a reaſonable *poſtulatum* or demand among *Chriſtians*) there is nothing in *Mathematicks* more demonſtrable than the folly of wicked men; for it is not a clearer and more evident principle *that the whole is greater than a part*, than that eternity and the concernments of it are to be preferred before time.

I will therefore put the matter into a temporal Caſe, that wicked men who underſtand any thing of the rules and principles of worldly wiſdom may ſee the imprudence of an irreligious and ſinful courſe, and be convinced *that this their way is their folly, even themſelves being judges.*

Is that man wiſe, as to his body and his health, who only cloaths his hands but leaves his whole body naked? who provides only againſt the tooth-ach, and neglects whole troops of mortal diſeaſes that are ready to ruſh in upon him? Juſt thus does he who takes care only for this vile body, but neglects his precious and immortal ſoul; who is very ſolicitous to prevent ſmall and temporal inconveniences, but takes no care *to eſcape the damnation of hell.*

Is he a prudent man, as to his temporal eſtate, that lays deſigns only for a day, without any proſpect to, or proviſion for the Remaining part of his life? even ſo does he that provides for the ſhort time of this life, but takes no care for all Eternity, which is to be wiſe for a moment, but a fool for ever, and to act as untowardly and as croſly to the reaſon of things as can be imagined, to regard time as if it were eternity, and to neglect eternity as if it were but a ſhort time.

Do we count him a wiſe man, who is wiſe in any thing but in his own proper profeſſion and employment, wiſe for every body but himſelf; who is ingenious to contrive his own miſery and to do himſelf a miſchief, but is dull and ſtupid as to the deſigning of any real benefit and advantage to himſelf? Such a one is he, who is ingenious in his Calling but a bad Chriſtian; for Chriſtianity is more our proper calling and profeſſion than the very trades we live upon: and ſuch is every ſinner, who is *wiſe to do evil, but to do good hath no underſtanding.*

Is it wiſdom in any man to neglect and diſoblige him who is his beſt friend, and can be his ſoreſt enemy? or with one weak troop to go out to meet him that comes againſt him with thouſands of thouſands, to fly a ſmall danger and run upon a greater? Thus does every wicked man that neglects and contemns God, *who can ſave or deſtroy him*; who ſtrives with his *Maker and provoketh the Lord to jealouſy*, and with the ſmall and inconſiderable forces of a man takes the field againſt the *mighty God, the Lord of Hoſts*; who *fears them that can kill the body, but after that have no more that they can do; but fears not him, who after he hath kill'd, can deſtroy both body and ſoul in hell*; and thus does he who for fear of any thing in this world ventures to diſpleaſe God, for in ſo doing he runs away from men, and *falls into the hands of the living God*, he flies from a temporal danger and leaps into Hell.

Is not he an imprudent man, who in matters of greateſt moment and concernment neglects opportunities never to be retriev'd, who ſtanding upon the ſhore, and ſeeing the tide making haſte towards him apace, and that he hath but a few minutes to ſave himſelf, yet will lay himſelf to ſleep there till the cruel ſea ruſh in upon him and overwhelm him? And is he any better who trifles away this day of God's grace and patience, and fooliſhly adjourns the neceſſary work of repentance and the weighty buſineſs of Religion to a dying hour.

And to put an end to theſe queſtions, Is he wiſe who hopes to attain the End without the means, nay, by means that are quite contrary to it? ſuch is every wicked man who hopes to be bleſſed hereafter without being holy here, and to be happy, that is, to find a pleaſure in the enjoyment of God and in the company of holy ſpirits by rendring himſelf as unſuitable and unlike to them as he can.

Wouldſt thou then be truly wiſe? Be wiſe for thy ſelf, wiſe for thy ſoul, wiſe for eternity. Reſolve upon a religious courſe of life. *Fear God and depart from evil.* Look beyond things preſent and ſenſible unto things which are not ſeen and are eternal, labour to ſecure the great intereſts of another world, and refer all the actions of this ſhort and dying life to that ſtate which will ſhortly begin but never have an end: and this will approve it ſelf to be wiſdom at the laſt, whatever the world judge of it now. For not that which is approved of men now, but what ſhall finally be approved by God is true wiſdom; that which is eſteemed ſo by him who is the fountain and original of all wiſdom, the firſt rule and meaſure, the beſt and moſt competent judge of it.

I deny not but thoſe that are wicked and neglect Religion may think themſelves wiſe, and may enjoy this their deluſion for a while: But there is a time a coming when the moſt prophane and atheiſtical, who now account it a piece of Gallantry and an argument of a great ſpirit and of a more than common wit and underſtanding to ſlight God and to baffle Religion and to level all the diſcourſes of another world with the Poetical deſcriptions of the Fairy-land; I ſay, there is a day a coming when all theſe witty fools ſhall be unhappily undeceived, and not being able to enjoy their deluſion any longer ſhall call themſelves fools for ever.

But why ſhould I uſe ſo much importunity to perſuade men to that which is ſo excellent, ſo uſeful, and ſo neceſſary? The thing it ſelf hath allurements in it beyond all arguments: For if Religion be the beſt knowledge and wiſdom I cannot offer any thing beyond this to your underſtandings to raiſe your eſteem of it, I can preſent nothing beyond this to your affections to excite your love and deſire. All that can be done is to ſet the thing before men, and to offer it to their choice; and if mens natural deſire of wiſdom and knowledge and happineſs will not perſuade them to be religious, 'tis in vain to uſe arguments; if the ſight of theſe beauties will not charm mens affections, 'tis to no purpoſe to go about to compel a liking, and to urge and puſh forward a match to the making whereof conſent is neceſſary. Religion is matter of our freeſt choice, and if men will obſtinately and wilfully ſet themſelves againſt it there is no remedy. *Pertinaciæ nullum remedium poſuit Deus, God has provided no remedy for the obſtinacy of men*; but if they will chuſe to be fools and to be miſerable, he will leave them to inherit their own choice and to enjoy the portion of ſinners.

SERMON II.

The Folly of Scoffing at Religion.

2 PET. III. 3.

Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts.

KNowing this firſt*. In the *verſe* before, the *Apoſtle* was ſpeaking of a famous *prophecy* before the accompliſhment of which this ſort of men whom he calls *ſcoffers* ſhould come *That ye may be mindful of the words which were ſpoken before by the holy Prophets, and of the commandment of us the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour*; *Knowing this firſt, that there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers*, &c.

The *prophecy* here ſpoken of is probably that famous prediction of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* which is in the Prophet *Daniel*, and before the fulfilling whereof our Saviour expreſly tells us *falſe prophets ſhould ariſe and deceive many*. Mat. 24. 11.

Now the *ſcoffers* here ſpoken of are the *falſe teachers* whom the *Apoſtle* had been deſcribing all along in the foregoing *Chapter*, *there were falſe prophets alſo among the people, even as there ſhall be falſe teachers among you*. Theſe, he tells us, ſhould proceed to that height of impiety as to ſcoff at the principles of Religion and to deride the expectations of a future judgment, *In the laſt days ſhall come ſcoffers walking after their own luſts, and ſaying, where is the promiſe of his coming?*

In ſpeaking to theſe words, I ſhall do theſe three things.

1. Conſider the nature of the ſin here mentioned, which is *ſcoffing* at Religion.
2. The character of the perſons that are charg'd with the guilt of this ſin, they are ſaid *to walk after their own luſts*.
3. I ſhall repreſent to you the heinouſneſs and the aggravations of this vice.

I. *Firſt*, We will conſider the nature of the ſin here mentioned, which is *ſcoffing* at Religion, *There ſhall come ſcoffers*: Theſe it ſeems were a ſort of people that derided our Saviour's prediction of his coming to judge the world. So the Apoſtle tells us in the next words, that they ſaid, *where is the promiſe of his coming?*

2 Theſ. 3. 2. In thoſe times there was a common perſuaſion among Chriſtians *that the day of the Lord was at hand*, as the *Apoſtle* elſewhere tells us. Now this 'tis probable, theſe *ſcoffers* twitted the Chriſtians withal; and becauſe Chriſt did not come when ſome looked for him they concluded he would not come at all. Upon this they derided the Chriſtians as enduring perſecution in a vain expectation of that which was never likely to happen. They ſaw all things continue *as they were from the beginning of the world*, notwithſtanding

the apprehenſions of Chriſtians concerning the approaching end of it; *For ſince the Fathers fell aſleep all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the world. Since the fathers fell aſleep,* ἀφ' ἧς, which may either be rendred *from the time,* or elſe (which ſeems more agreeable to the atheiſtical diſcourſe of theſe men) *ſaving* or *except that the fathers are fallen aſleep, all things continue as they were;* Saving that men dye and one generation ſucceeds another, they ſaw no change or alteration. They looked upon all things as going on in a conſtant courſe; One generation of men paſſed away and another came in the room of it, but the world remain'd ſtill as it was. And thus for ought they knew things might hold on for ever. So that the principles of theſe men ſeem to be much the ſame with thoſe of the *Epicureans;* who denied the providence of God and the immortality of mens ſouls; and conſequently a future judgment which ſhould ſentence men to rewards and puniſhments in another world. Theſe great and fundamental principles of all Religion they derided as the fancies and dreams of a company of melancholy men, who were weary of the world and pleaſed themſelves with vain conceits of happineſs and eaſe in another life. But as for them, they believed none of thoſe things; and therefore gave all manner of licenſe and indulgence to their luſts.

But this belongs to the ſecond thing I propounded to ſpeak to, namely,

II. The character which is here given of theſe *ſcoffers;* They are ſaid *to walk after their own luſts.* And no wonder if when they denied a future judgment they gave up themſelves to all manner of ſenſuality.

St. *Jude* in his *Epiſtle* gives much the ſame character of them that St. *Peter* here does, ver. 18, 19. *There ſhall come in the laſt days mockers, walking after their own ungodly luſts, ſenſual, not having the ſpirit.* So that we ſee what kind of perſons they are who prophanely ſcoff at Religion, men of ſenſual ſpirits and of licentious lives. For this character which the *Apoſtle* here gives of the *ſcoffers* of that age was not an accidental thing which happened to thoſe perſons, but is the conſtant character of them who deride Religion, and flows from the very temper and diſpoſition of thoſe who are guilty of this impiety; it is both the uſual preparation to it, and the natural conſequent of it.

To deride God and Religion is the higheſt kind of impiety. And men do not uſually arrive to this degree of wickedneſs at firſt, but they come to it by ſeveral ſteps. The *Pſalmiſt* very elegantly expreſſeth to us the ſeveral gradations by which men at laſt come to this horrid degree of impiety; *Bleſſed is the man, that walketh not in the counſel of the ungodly, nor ſtandeth in the way of ſinners, nor ſitteth in the ſeat of the ſcornful.* Pſal. 1. 1. Men are uſually firſt corrupted by bad counſel and company, which is called *walking in the counſel of the ungodly;* next they habituate themſelves to their vicious practices, which is *ſtanding in the way of ſinners;* and then at laſt they take up and ſettle in a contempt of all Religion, which is called *ſitting in the ſeat of the ſcornful.*

For when men once indulge themſelves in wicked courſes, the vicious inclinations of their minds ſway their underſtandings, and make them apt to disbelieve thoſe truths which contradict their luſts. Every inordinate luſt and paſſion is a falſe byaſs upon mens underſtandings which naturally draws toward Atheiſm. And when mens judgments are once byaſſed they do not believe according to the evidence of things, but according to their humour and their intereſt. For when men live as if there were no God it becomes expedient for them that there ſhould be none: And then they endeavour to perſuade themſelves ſo, and will be glad to find arguments to fortify themſelves in this perſuaſion. Men of diſſolute lives cry down Religion, becauſe they would not be under the reſtraints of it; they are loth to be tied up by the ſtrict laws and rules of it: 'Tis their intereſt more than any reaſon they have againſt it which makes them deſpiſe it, they hate it becauſe they are reproved by it. So our Saviour tells us, that *men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* John 3. 19, 20.

I remember it is the ſaying of *one*, who hath done more by his *Writings* to debauch the Age with Atheiſtical principles than any man that lives in it, *That when reaſon is againſt a man, then a man will be againſt reaſon.* I am ſure this is the true account of ſuch mens enmity to Religion, Religion is againſt them, and therefore they ſet themſelves againſt Religion. The principles of Religion and the doctrines of the *holy Scriptures* are terrible enemies to wicked men, they are continually flying in their faces and galling their conſciences: And this is that which makes them kick againſt Religion and ſpurn at the doctrines of that *holy Book*. And this may probably be one reaſon why many men, who are obſerved to be ſufficiently dull in other matters, yet can talk prophanely and ſpeak againſt Religion with ſome kind of ſalt and ſmartneſs, becauſe Religion is the thing that frets them; and as in other things ſo in this *vexatio dat intellectum*, the inward trouble and vexation of their minds gives them ſome kind of wit and ſharpneſs in rallying upon Religion. Their conſciences are galled by it, and this makes them winch and fling as if they had ſome metal. For, let men pretend what they will, there is no eaſe and comfort of mind to be had from atheiſtical principles. 'Tis found by experience, that none are more apprehenſive of danger or more fearful of death than this ſort of men: Even when they are in proſperity they ever and anon feel many inward ſtings and laſhes, but when any great affliction or calamity overtakes them they are the moſt poor-ſpirited creatures in the whole world.

The ſum is, the true reaſon why any man is an Atheiſt is becauſe he is a wicked man. Religion would curb him in his luſts, and therefore he caſts it off and puts all the ſcorn upon it he can. Beſides, that men think it ſome kind of apology for their vices that they do not act contrary to any principle they profeſs: Their practice is agreeable to what they pretend to believe, and ſo they think to vindicate themſelves and their own practices by laughing at thoſe for fools who believe any thing to the contrary.

III. The *third* thing I propounded was, to repreſent to you the heinouſneſs and the aggravations of this vice. And to make this out we will make theſe three ſuppoſitions, which are as many as the thing will bear.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe.

2. Suppoſe the matter were doubtful, and the arguments equal on both ſides.

3. Suppoſe it certain that there is a God, and that the principles of Religion are true. Put the caſe how we will, I ſhall ſhew that the humour is intolerable.

1. Suppoſe there were no God, and that the principles of Religion were falſe. Not that there is any reaſon for ſuch a ſuppoſition, but only to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this humour; Put the caſe that theſe men were in the right, in denying the principles of Religion, and that all that they pretend were true; yet ſo long as the generality of mankind believes the contrary, it is certainly a great rudeneſs, or incivility at leaſt, to deride and ſcoff at theſe things. Indeed upon this ſuppoſition there could be no ſuch thing as

ſin, but yet it would be a great offence againſt the laws of civil converſation. Suppoſe then the Atheiſt were wiſer than all the world, and that he did upon good grounds know that all mankind, beſides himſelf and two or three more, were miſtaken about the matters of Religion; yet if he were either ſo wiſe, or ſo civil as he ſhould be, he would keep all this to himſelf, and not affront other men about theſe things.

I remember that that *Law* which God gave to the people of *Iſrael*, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Rulers of thy people*; is rendred by *Joſephus* in a very different ſenſe: *What other nations account Gods, let no man blaſpheme.* And this is not ſo different from the *Hebrew* as at firſt ſight one would imagine, for the ſame *Hebrew* word ſignifies both *Gods* and *Rulers*. But whether this be the meaning of that *Law* or not there is a great deal of reaſon in the thing. For though every man have a right in diſpute againſt a falſe Religion, and to urge it with all its abſurd and ridiculous conſequences, as the Ancient *Fathers* did in their diſputes with the *Heathen*; yet it is a barbarous incivility for any man ſcurrilouſly to make ſport with that which others account Religion, not with any deſign to convince their reaſon but only to provoke their rage.

But now the Atheiſt can pretend no obligation of conſcience why he ſhould ſo much as diſpute againſt the principles of Religion, much leſs deride them. He that pretends to any Religion may pretend conſcience for oppoſing a contrary Religion: But he that denies all Religion, can pretend no conſcience for any thing. A man may be obliged indeed in reaſon and common humanity to free his neighbour from a hurtful error; but ſuppoſing there were no God this notion of a Deity and the Principles of Religion have taken ſuch deep root in the mind of man that either they are not to be extinguiſhed, or if they be it would be no kindneſs to any man to endeavour it for him, becauſe it is not to be done but with ſo much trouble and violence that the remedy would be worſe than the diſeaſe.

For if this notion of a Deity be founded in a natural fear, it is in vain to attempt to expel it; for whatever violence may be offer'd to nature by endeavouring to reaſon men into a contrary perſuaſion, nature will ſtill recoil and at laſt return to it ſelf, and then the fear will be augmented from the apprehenſion of the dangerous conſequences of ſuch an impiety. So that nothing can create more trouble to a man than to endeavour to diſpoſſeſs him of this conceit, becauſe nature is but irritated by the conteſt, and the man's fears will be doubled upon him.

But if we ſuppoſe this apprehenſion of a Deity to have no foundation in nature, but to have had its riſe from tradition which hath been confirmed in the world by the prejudice of education, the difficulty of removing it will almoſt be as great as if it were natural, that which men take in by education being next to that which is natural. And if it could be extinguiſh'd, yet the advantage of it will not recompence the trouble of the cure. For, except the avoiding of perſecution for Religion, there is no advantage that the principles of Atheiſm if they could be quietly ſettled in a man's mind can give him. The advantage indeed that men make of them is to give themſelves the liberty to do what they pleaſe, to be more ſenſual and more unjuſt than other men; that is, they have the privilege to ſurfeit themſelves and to be ſick oftner than other men, and to make mankind their enemy by their unjuſt and diſhoneſt actions, and conſequently to live more uneaſily in the world than other men.

So that the principles of Religion, the *belief of a God*, and *another life*, by obliging men to be virtuous do really promote their temporal happineſs.

And all the priviledge that Atheiſm pretends to is to let men looſe to vice, which is naturally attended with temporal inconveniences. And if this be true, then the Atheiſt cannot pretend this Reaſon of charity to mankind (which is the only one I can think of) to diſpute againſt Religion, much leſs to rally upon it. For it is plain, that it would be no kindneſs to any man to be undeceived in theſe principles of Religion, ſuppoſing they were falſe. Becauſe the principles of Religion are ſo far from hindring that they promote a man's happineſs even in this world, and as to the other world there can be no inconvenience in the miſtake, for when a man is not it will be no trouble to him that he was once deceived about theſe matters.

And where no obligation of conſcience nor of reaſon can be pretended, there certainly the laws of civility ought to take place. Now men do profeſs to believe that there is a God, and that the common principles of Religion are true, and to have a great veneration for theſe things. Can there then be a greater inſolence, than for a man when he comes into company to rally and fall foul upon thoſe things for which he knows the company have a reverence? Can one man offer a greater affront to another, than to expoſe to ſcorn him whom he owns and declares to be his beſt friend, the patron of his life, and the greateſt benefactor he hath in the world? And doth not every man that owns a God ſay this of him?

But when the generality of Mankind are of the ſame opinion the rudeneſs is ſtill the greater. So that whoever doth openly contemn God and Religion does *delinquere in majeſtatem populi & humani generis*, he does offend againſt the majeſty of the People and that reverence which is due to the common apprehenſions of Mankind, whether they be true or not; which is the greateſt incivility that can be imagin'd.

This is the firſt conſideration, and it is the leaſt that I have to urge in this matter. But yet I have inſiſted the longer upon it, becauſe it is ſuch a one as ought eſpecially to prevail upon thoſe whom I am afraid are too often guilty of this vice, I mean thoſe who are of better breeding, becauſe they pretend to underſtand the laws of behaviour and the decencies of converſation better than other men.

2. Suppoſing it were doubtful whether there be a God or not, and whether the Principles of Religion were true or not, and that the Arguments were equal on both Sides; yet it would be a great folly to deride theſe things. And here I ſuppoſe as much as the Atheiſt can with any colour of reaſon pretend to. For no man ever yet pretended to demonſtrate that there is no God, nor no life after this. For theſe being pure negatives are capable of no proof, unleſs a man could ſhew them to be plainly impoſſible. The utmoſt that is pretended is that the arguments that are brought for theſe things are not ſufficient to convince. But if they were only probable, ſo long as no arguments are produced to the contrary, that cannot in reaſon be denied to be a great advantage.

But I will for the preſent ſuppoſe the probabilities equal on both ſides. And upon this ſuppoſition I doubt not to make it appear to be a monſtrous folly to deride theſe things. Becauſe tho the arguments on both ſides were equal, yet the danger and hazard is infinitely unequal.

If it prove true that there is no God the religious man may be as happy in this world as the atheiſt, nay the principles of Religion and Virtue do in their own nature tend to make him happier. Becauſe they give ſatisfaction to his mind, and his conſcience by this means is freed from many fearful girds and twinges which the Atheiſt feels. Beſides, that the practice of Religion and virtue doth naturally promote our temporal felicity. It is more for a man's health, and more for his reputation, and more for his advantage in all other worldly reſpects to lead a virtuous than a vicious courſe of life. And for the other world, if there be no God the caſe of the religious man and the Atheiſt will be alike, becauſe they will both be extinguiſh'd by death and inſenſible of any farther happineſs or miſery.

But then if the contrary opinion ſhould prove true, that there is a God; and that the ſouls of men are tranſmitted out of this world into the other, there to receive the juſt reward of their actions: Then it is plain to every man at firſt ſight, that the caſe of the religious man and the Atheiſt muſt be vaſtly different: Then, where ſhall the wicked, and the ungodly appear? And what think we ſhall be the portion of thoſe who have affronted God, and derided his word, and made a mock of every thing that is ſacred and religious? What can they expect but to be rejected by him whom they have renounced, and to feel the terrible effects of that power and Juſtice which they have deſpiſed? So that tho the arguments on both ſides were equal, yet the danger is not ſo. On the one ſide there is none at all, but 'tis infinite on the other. And conſequently, it muſt be a monſtrous folly for any man to make a mock of thoſe things which he knows not whether they be or not; and if they be, of all things in the world they are no jeſting matters.

3. Suppoſe there be a God and that the principles of Religion are true, then is it not only a heinous impiety but a perfect madneſs to ſcoff at theſe things. And that there is a God, and that the Principles of Religion are true, I have already in my former *diſcourſe* endeavoured to prove; both from the things which are made, and from the general conſent of mankind in theſe principles; of which univerſal conſent no ſufficient Reaſon can be given unleſs they were true. And ſuppoſing they are ſo, it is not only the utmoſt pitch of impiety, but the higheſt flight of folly that can be imagined to deride theſe things. To be diſobedient to the commands of God is a great contempt, but to deny his *Being*, and to make ſport with his *word*, and to endeavour to render it ridiculous by turning the wiſe and weighty ſayings of that *Holy Book* into raillery, is a moſt direct affront to the God that is above. Thus the *Pſalmiſt* deſcribes theſe atheiſtical perſons as levelling their blaſphemies immediately againſt the majeſty of heaven. *They ſet their mouth againſt the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth*; they do miſchief among men, but the affront is immediately to God.

Beſides, that this prophane ſpirit is an argument of a moſt incorrigible temper. The *Wiſe man* every where ſpeaks of the *ſcorner* as one of the worſt ſort of ſinners and hardeſt to be reclaimed, becauſe he *deſpiſeth inſtruction* and mocks at all the means whereby he ſhould be reformed.

And then, is it not a moſt black and horrid ingratitude thus to uſe the Author of our Beings and the Patron of our Lives; to make a ſcorn of him that made us, and to live in an open defiance of him *in whom we live, move, and have our beings?* But this is not all. As it is a moſt heinous ſo it is a moſt dangerous impiety, to deſpiſe him that can deſtroy us, and to oppoſe him who is infinitely more powerful than we are. *Will ye* (ſays the Apoſtle) *provoke the Lord to jealouſy? are ye ſtronger than he?* What *Gamaliel* ſaid to the *Jews*, in another caſe, may with a little change be applied to this ſort of men; If there be a God, and the principles of Religion be true, *ye cannot overthrow them, therefore refrain from ſpeaking againſt theſe* things, *leſt ye be found fighters againſt God.*

I will but add one thing more to ſhew the folly of this prophane temper. And that is this, that as it is the greateſt of all other ſins ſo there is in truth the leaſt temptation to it. When the Devil tempts men with riches or honour to ruin themſelves he offers them ſome kind of conſideration, but the prophane perſon ſerves the Devil for nought, and ſins only for ſin's ſake, ſuffers himſelf to be tempted to the greateſt ſins and into the greateſt dangers for no other reward but the ſlender reputation of ſeeming to ſay that wittily which no wiſe man would ſay. And what a folly is this, for a man to offend his conſcience to pleaſe his humour, and only for his jeſt to loſe two of the beſt Friends he hath in the world, God and his own ſoul?

I have done with the *three* things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument. And now I beg your patience to apply what I have ſaid to theſe three purpoſes.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly of prophaneneſs which by ſome is miſcalled wit.

2. To caution men not to think the worſe of Religion, becauſe ſome are ſo bold as to deſpiſe and deride it.

3. To perſuade men to employ that reaſon and wit which God hath given them, to better and nobler purpoſes, in the ſervice and to the glory of that God who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men.

1. To take men off from this impious and dangerous folly. I know not how it comes to paſs that ſome men have the fortune to be eſteemed Wits only for jeſting out of the common road, and for making bold to ſcoff at thoſe things which the greateſt part of mankind reverence. As if a man ſhould be accounted a Wit for reviling thoſe in Authority which is no more an argument of any man's wit than it is of his diſcretion. A wiſe man would not ſpeak contemptuouſly of a great Prince though he were out of his Dominions, becauſe he remembers that Kings have long hands, and that their power and influence does many times reach a great way farther than their direct Authority. But God *is a great King, and in his hand are all the corners of the earth*; *we can go no whither from his Spirit, nor can we flee from his preſence*; where ever we are *his eye ſees us* and *his right hand* can reach us. If men did truly conſult the intereſt either of their ſafety or reputation, they would never exerciſe their wit in dangerous matters. Wit is a very commendable quality, but then a wiſe man ſhould always have the keeping of it. It is a ſharp weapon, as apt for miſchief as for good purpoſes if it be not well manag'd. The proper uſe of it is to ſeaſon converſation, to repreſent what is praiſe-worthy to the greateſt advantage, and to expoſe the vices and follies of men, ſuch things as are in themſelves truly ridiculous: But if it be applied to the abuſe of the graveſt and moſt ſerious matters it then loſes its commendation. If any man think he abounds in this quality and hath wit to ſpare there is ſcope enough for it within the bounds of Religion and decency, and when it tranſgreſſeth theſe it degenerates into inſolence and impiety. All wit which borders upon prophaneneſs and makes bold with thoſe things to which the greateſt reverence is due deſerves to be branded for folly.

And if we would preſerve our ſelves from the infection of this vice we muſt take heed how we ſcoff at Religion, under any form, leſt inſenſibly we derive ſome contempt upon Religion it ſelf. And we muſt likewiſe take heed how we accuſtom our ſelves to a ſlight and irreverent uſe of the Name of God, and of the phraſes and expreſſions of the Holy Bible, which ought not to be applied upon every light occaſion. Men will eaſily ſlide into the higheſt degree of prophaneneſs who are not careful to preſerve a due reverence of the great and glorious Name of God, and an awful regard to the Holy Scriptures. None ſo nearly diſpoſed to ſcoffing at Religion as thoſe who have accuſtomed themſelves to ſwear upon trifling occaſions. For it is juſt

juſt with God to permit thoſe who allow themſelves in one degree of prophaneneſs to proceed to another, till at laſt they come to that height of impiety as to contemn all Religion.

2. Let no man think the worſe of Religion, becauſe ſome are ſo bold as to deſpiſe and deride it. For 'tis no diſparagement to any perſon or thing to be laught at, but to deſerve to be ſo. The moſt grave and ſerious matters in the whole world are liable to be abus'd. It is a known ſaying of *Epictetus*, *that every thing hath two handles*; By which he means, that there is nothing ſo bad but a man may lay hold of ſomething or other about it that will afford matter of excuſe and extenuation, nor nothing ſo excellent but a man may faſten upon ſomething or other belonging to it whereby to reduce it. A ſharp wit may find ſomething in the wiſeſt man whereby to expoſe him to the contempt of injudicious people. The graveſt book that ever was written may be made ridiculous by applying the ſayings of it to a fooliſh purpoſe. For a jeſt may be obtruded upon any thing. And therefore no man ought to have the leſs reverence for the principles of Religion, or for the holy Scriptures, becauſe idle and prophane Wits can break jeſts upon them. Nothing is ſo eaſy as to take particular phraſes and expreſſions out of the beſt Book in the world and to abuſe them by forcing an odd and ridiculous ſenſe upon them. But no wiſe man will think a good Book fooliſh for this reaſon, but the man that abuſes it; nor will he eſteem that to which every thing is liable to be a juſt exception againſt any thing. At this rate we muſt deſpiſe all things, but ſurely the better and the ſhorter way is to contemn thoſe who would bring any thing that is worthy into contempt.

3. And laſtly, to perſuade men to employ that reaſon and wit which God hath given them to better and nobler purpoſes in the ſervice and to the glory of that God who hath beſtowed theſe gifts on men, as *Aholiab* and *Bezaleel* did their mechanical skill in the adorning and beautifying of God's Tabernacle. For this is the perfection of every thing, to attain its true and proper end; and the end of all thoſe gifts and endowments which God hath given us is to glorify the giver.

Here is ſubject enough to exerciſe the wit of men and angels: To praiſe that infinite goodneſs, and almighty power, and exquiſite wiſdom which made us and all things; and to admire what we can never ſufficiently praiſe; To vindicate the wiſe and juſt providence of God, in the government of the world; and to endeavour, as well as we can upon an imperfect view of things, to make out the beauty and harmony of all the ſeeming diſcords and irregularities of the Divine adminiſtrations; To explain the oracles of the holy Scriptures, and to adore that great myſtery of Divine love (which the Angels, better and nobler Creatures than we are, deſire to pry into) God's ſending his only Son into the world to ſave ſinners, and to give his life a ranſom for them: Theſe would be noble exerciſes indeed for the tongues and pens of the greateſt Wits. And ſubjects of this nature are the beſt trials of our ability in this kind. Satyr and invective are the eaſieſt kind of wit. Almoſt any degree of it will ſerve to abuſe and find fault. For wit is a keen inſtrument, and every one can cut and gaſh with it, but to carve a beautiful image and to poliſh it requires great art and dexterity. To praiſe any thing well is an argument of much more wit, than to abuſe. A little wit, and a great deal of ill nature will furniſh a man for Satyr, but the greateſt inſtance of wit is to commend well. And perhaps the beſt things are the hardeſt to be duly commended. For tho there be a great deal of matter to work upon yet there is great judgment required to make choice, and where the ſubject is great and excellent it is hard not to ſink below the dignity of it.

This I ſay on purpoſe to recommend to men a nobler exerciſe for their wits, and if it be poſſible, to put them out of conceit with that ſcoffing humour which is ſo eaſy, and ſo ill-natur'd, and is not only an enemy to Religion but to every thing elſe that is wiſe and worthy. And I am very much miſtaken, if the State as well as the Church, the civil government as well as Religion, do not in a ſhort ſpace find the intolerable inconvenience of this humour.

But I confine my ſelf to the conſideration of Religion. And it is ſad indeed, that in a Nation profeſſing Chriſtianity ſo horrid an impiety ſhould dare to appear. But the Scripture hath foretold us that this ſort of men ſhould ariſe in the Goſpel-age, and they did appear even in the Apoſtles days. That which is more ſad and ſtrange is, that we ſhould perſiſt in this prophaneneſs notwithſtanding the terrible judgments of God which have been abroad in this Nation. God hath of late years manifeſted himſelf in a very dreadful manner, as if it were on purpoſe to give a check to this inſolent impiety. And now that thoſe judgments have done no good upon us we may juſtly fear that he will appear once for all. And 'tis time for him to ſhew himſelf when his very Being is call'd in queſtion, and to come and judge the world when men begin to doubt whether he made it.

The *Scripture* mentions two things as the fore-runners and reaſons of his coming to judgment, *infidelity*, and *prophane ſcoffing* at Religion. *When the Son of man comes, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* And St. *Jude* out of an ancient prophecy of *Enoch* expreſly mentions this as one reaſon of the coming of the Lord, *to convince ungodly ſinners of all their hard ſpeeches which they had ſpoken againſt him.*

Luk. 18.8.

Jude 15. ver.

And if theſe things be a ſign and reaſon of his coming, I wiſh that we in this Age had not too much cauſe to apprehend *the Judge to be at the door.* This impiety did forerun the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem,* and the utter ruin of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and if it hold on amongſt us, may not we have reaſon to fear that either *the end of all things is at hand,* or that ſome very diſmal calamity greater than any our eyes have yet ſeen does hang over us? But I would fain hope that God hath mercy ſtill for us, and that men will pity themſelves, and *repent, and give glory to God,* and *know in this their day the things that belong to their peace.* Which God of his infinite mercy grant for the ſake of Chriſt, To whom with the Father, *&c.*

SERMON III.

The Advantages of Religion to Societies.

PROV. XIV. 34.

Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation; but ſin is the reproach of any people.

ONE of the firſt principles that is planted in the nature of man, and which lies at the very root and foundation of his being is the deſire of his own preſervation and happineſs. Hence it is that every man is led by intereſt, and does love or hate, chuſe or refuſe things, according as he apprehends them to conduce to this end, or to contradict it. And becauſe the happineſs of this life is moſt preſent and ſenſible, therefore humane nature (which in this degenerate ſtate is extremely ſunk down into ſenſe) is moſt powerfully affected with ſenſible and temporal things. And conſequently, there cannot be a greater prejudice raiſed againſt any thing than to have it repreſented as inconvenient and hurtful to our temporal intereſts.

Upon this account it is that Religion hath extremely ſuffer'd in the opinion of many as if it were oppoſite to our preſent welfare, and did rob men of the greateſt advantages and conveniences of life. So that he that would do right to Religion, and make a ready way for the entertainment of it among men, cannot take a more effectual courſe than by reconciling it with the happineſs of mankind and by giving ſatisfaction to our reaſon, that it is ſo far from being an enemy that it is the greateſt friend to our temporal intereſts; and that it doth not only tend to make every man happy conſider'd ſingly and in a private capacity, but is excellently fitted for the benefit of humane ſociety.

How much Religion tends even to the temporal advantage of private perſons I ſhall not now conſider, becauſe my Text leads me to diſcourſe of the other, namely, to ſhew how advantageous Religion and Virtue are to the publick proſperity of a Nation, which I take to be the meaning of this *Aphoriſm* of *Solomon*, *Righteouſneſs exalteth a Nation*, &c.

And here I ſhall not reſtrain *righteouſneſs* to the particular virtue of juſtice (tho in this ſenſe alſo this ſaying is moſt true) but enlarge it according to the *genius* and ſtrain of the Book of the *Proverbs*, in which the words *wiſdom* and *righteouſneſs* are commonly uſed very comprehenſively ſo as to ſignify all Religion and Virtue. And that this word is ſo to be taken in the Text may appear farther from the oppoſition of it to ſin or vice in general; *Righteouſneſs* exalteth a Nation, but *Sin* is the reproach of any People.

You ſee then what will be the ſubject of my preſent diſcourſe; namely, that *Religion and Virtue are the great cauſes of publick happineſs and proſperity.*

And though the truth of this hath been univerſally acknowledged and long enough experienced in the world, yet becauſe the faſhion of the age is to call every thing into queſtion, it will be requiſite to ſatiſfy mens reaſon about it. To which end I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. Endeavour to give an account of this Truth.
2. To vindicate it from the pretences and inſinuations of atheiſtical perſons.

I ſhall give you this twofold account of it.

1. From the juſtice of the Divine providence.
2. From the natural tendency of the thing.

1. From the juſtice of the Divine providence. Indeed, as to particular perſons, the providences of God are many times promiſcuouſly adminiſtred in this world; ſo that no man can certainly conclude God's love or hatred to any perſon by any thing that befals him in this life. But God does not deal thus with Nations. Becauſe publick bodies and communities of men, as ſuch, can only be rewarded and puniſhed in this world. For in the next, all thoſe publick ſocieties and combinations wherein men are now link'd together under ſeveral Governments, ſhall be diſſolved. God will not then reward or puniſh Nations, as Nations; But every man ſhall then give an account of himſelf to God, and receive his own reward, and bear his own burthen. For altho God account it no diſparagement to his juſtice to let particular good men ſuffer in this world and paſs *through many tribulations into the kingdom of God*, becauſe there is another day a coming which will be a more proper ſeaſon of reward; yet in the uſual courſe of his providence he recompenceth religious and virtuous Nations with temporal bleſſings and proſperity. For which reaſon St. *Auſtin* tells us that the mighty ſucceſs and long proſperity of the *Romans* was a reward given them by God for their eminent juſtice and temperance, and other virtues. And on the other hand, God many times ſuffers the moſt grievous ſins of particular perſons to go unpuniſhed in this world, becauſe he knows that his juſtice will have another and better opportunity to meet and reckon with them. But the general and crying ſins of a Nation cannot hope to eſcape publick judgments, unleſs they be prevented by a general repentance. God may defer his judgments for a time and give a People a longer ſpace of repentance, he may ſtay till the iniquities of a Nation be full, but ſooner or later they have reaſon to expect his vengeance. And uſually the longer puniſhment is delay'd it is the heavier when it comes.

Now all this is very reaſonable, becauſe this world is the only ſeaſon for National puniſhments. And indeed they are in a great degree neceſſary for the preſent vindication of the honour and majeſty of the Divine Laws, and to give ſome check to the overflowing of wickedneſs. Publick judgments are the banks and ſhores upon which God breaks the inſolency of ſinners and ſtays their proud waves. And though among men the multitude of offenders be many times a cauſe of impunity, becauſe of the weakneſs of humane Governments which are glad to ſpare where they are not ſtrong enough to puniſh, yet in the government of God, things are quite otherwiſe. No combination of ſinners is too hard for him, and the greater and more numerous the offenders are, the more his juſtice is concern'd to vindicate the affront. However God may paſs by ſingle ſinners in this world, yet when a Nation combines againſt him, *when hand joins in hand the wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed.*

This the *Scripture* declares to be the ſettled courſe of God's providence; That a righteous Nation ſhall be happy; *The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace; and the effects of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.* And on the other hand, that he uſeth to ſhower down his judgments upon a wicked people, *he turneth a fruitful land into barrenneſs for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein:*

And the experience of all ages hath made this good. All along the Hiſtory of the *Old Teſtament*, we find the interchangeable providences of God towards the People of *Iſrael* always ſuited to their manners. They were conſtantly proſperous or afflicted according as piety and virtue flouriſhed or declined amongſt them. And God did not only exerciſe this providence towards his own People, but he dealt thus alſo with other Nations. The *Roman Empire* whilſt the virtue of that people remained firm was *ſtrong as iron*, as 'tis repreſented in the Prophecy of *Daniel:* But upon the diſſolution of their manners the *iron* began *to be mixt with miry clay*, and the *feet* upon which that Empire ſtood, *to be broken.* And tho God in the adminiſtration of his juſtice be not tied to precedents, and we cannot argue from Scripture-examples that the providences of God towards other Nations ſhall in all circumſtances be conformable to his dealings with the People of *Iſrael*; yet thus much may with great probability be collected from them, that as God always bleſſed that People while they were obedient to him, and followed them with his judgments when they rebelled againſt him, ſo he will alſo deal with other Nations. Becauſe the reaſon of thoſe diſpenſations as to the main and ſubſtance of them ſeems to be perpetual, and founded in that which can never change, the juſtice of the Divine providence.

2dly. The truth of this farther appears from the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion in general, and every particular virtue, doth in its own nature conduce to the publick Intereſt.

Religion, where-ever it is truly planted is certainly the greateſt obligation upon conſcience to all civil offices and moral duties. Chaſtity and temperance and induſtry do in their own nature tend to health and plenty. Truth and fidelity in all our dealings do create mutual love and good-will and confidence among men, which are the great bands of peace. And on the contrary, wickedneſs doth in its own nature produce many publick miſchiefs. For as ſins are link'd together and draw on one another, ſo almoſt every vice hath ſome temporal inconvenience annexed to it and naturally following it. Intemperance and luſt breed infirmities and diſeaſes, which being propagated ſpoil the ſtrain of a Nation. Idleneſs and luxury bring forth poverty and want; and this tempts men to injuſtice, and that cauſeth enmity and animoſities, and theſe bring on *ſtrife* and *confuſion and every evil work.* This Philoſophical account of publick troubles and confuſions St. *James* gives us, *Whence come wars and fightings among you? are they not hence, even from your luſts that war in your members?* Jam. 4. 1.

But I ſhall ſhew more particularly, that Religion and virtue do naturally tend to the good order and more eaſy government of humane Society, becauſe they have a good influence both upon Magiſtrates and Subjects.

1. Upon Magiſtrates. Religion teacheth them to rule over men in the fear of God, becauſe tho they be Gods on earth yet they are ſubjects of Heaven, and accountable to Him who is higher than the higheſt in this world. Religion in a Magiſtrate ſtrengthens his authority, becauſe it procures veneration and gains a reputation to it. And in all the affairs of this world ſo much reputation is really ſo much power. We ſee that piety and Virtue, where they are found among men of lower degree, will command ſome reverence and reſpect: But in perſons of eminent place and dignity they are ſeated to a great advantage, ſo as to caſt a luſtre upon their very Place and by a ſtrong reflexion to double the beams of Majeſty. Whereas impiety and vice do ſtrangely leſſen greatneſs, and do ſecretly and unavoidably derive ſome weakneſs upon authority itſelf. Of this the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable inſtance in *David.* For among other things which made *the*

Sons of Zerviah too hard for him this probably was none of the leaſt, that they were particularly conſcious to his crimes.

2. Religion hath a good influence upon the People; to make them obedient to Government, and peaceable one towards another.

1. To make them obedient to Government, and conformable to Laws; and that *not only for wrath* and out of fear of the Magiſtrates power, which is but a weak and looſe principle of obedience, and will ceaſe, when ever men can rebel with ſafety, and to advantage; but out *of Conſcience*, which is a firm, and conſtant and laſting principle, and will hold a man faſt when all other obligations will break. He that hath entertain'd the true principles of Chriſtianity is not to be tempted from his obedience and ſubjection by any worldly conſiderations, becauſe he believes that *whatſoever reſiſteth authority reſiſteth the ordinance of God*, and that *they who reſiſt ſhall receive to themſelves damnation.*

2. Religion tends to make men peaceable one towards another. For it endeavours to plant all thoſe qualities and diſpoſitions in men which tend to peace and unity, and to fill men with a ſpirit of univerſal love and good will. It endeavours likewiſe to ſecure every man's intereſt by commanding the obſervation of that great rule of equity, *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them*; by enjoining that truth and fidelity be inviolably obſerved in all our words, promiſes and contracts. And in order hereunto it requires the extirpation of all thoſe paſſions and vices which render men unſociable and troubleſome to one another, as pride, covetouſneſs and injuſtice, hatred and revenge and cruelty; and thoſe likewiſe which are not ſo commonly reputed vices, as ſelf-conceit and peremptorineſs in a man's own opinion, and all peeviſhneſs, and incompliance of humour in things lawful and indifferent.

And that theſe are the proper effects of true piety the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apoſtles every where teacheth us. Now if this be the deſign of Religion to bring us to this temper, thus to heal the natures of men and to ſweeten their ſpirits, to correct their paſſions and to mortify all thoſe luſts which are the cauſes of enmity and diviſion, then it is evident that in its own nature it tends to the peace and happineſs of humane ſociety; and that if men would but live as Religion requires they ſhould do the world would be a quiet habitation, a moſt lovely and deſirable place in compariſon of what now it is. And indeed the true reaſon why the ſocieties of men are ſo full of tumult and diſorder, ſo troubleſome and tempeſtuous, is becauſe there is ſo little of true Religion among men; ſo that were it not for ſome ſmall remainders of piety and virtue which are yet left ſcatter'd among mankind, humane ſociety would in a ſhort ſpace disband and run into confuſion, the earth would grow wild and become a great foreſt, and mankind would become beaſts of prey one towards another. And if this diſcourſe hold true ſurely then one would think that virtue ſhould find it ſelf a ſeat where-ever humane ſocieties are, and that Religion ſhould be owned and encouraged in the world until men ceaſe to be governed by reaſon.

II. I come to vindicate this truth from the inſinuations and pretences of atheiſtical perſons. I ſhall mention two.

1. That Government may ſubſiſt well enough without the belief of a God and a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life.
2. That as for virtue and vice they are arbitrary things.

1. That Government may ſubſiſt well enough without the belief of a God

or a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments after this life. And this the Atheiſt does and muſt aſſert, otherwiſe he is by his own confeſſion a declared enemy to Government and unfit to live in humane ſociety.

For anſwer to this, I will not deny but that tho the generality of men did not believe any ſuperior Being nor any rewards and puniſhments after this life, yet notwithſtanding this there might be ſome kind of Government kept up in the world. For ſuppoſing men to have reaſon, the neceſſities of humane nature and the miſchiefs of confuſion would probably compel them into ſome kind of order. But then I ſay withal, that if theſe principles were baniſhed out of the world Government would be far more difficult than now it is, becauſe it would want its firmeſt Baſis and foundation; there would be infinitely more diſorders in the world if men were reſtrained from injuſtice and violence only by humane laws, and not by principles of conſcience and the dread of another world. Therefore Magiſtrates have always thought themſelves concerned to cheriſh Religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God and another life. Nay that common ſuggeſtion of atheiſtical perſons, that Religion was at firſt a politick device and is ſtill kept up in the world as a State-engine to awe men into obedience, is a clear acknowledgment of the uſefulneſs of it to the ends of Government, and does as fully contradict that pretence of theirs which I am now confuting as any thing that can be ſaid.

2. That virtue and vice are arbitrary things founded only in the imaginations of men and in the conſtitutions and cuſtoms of the world, but not in the nature of the things themſelves; and that *that* is virtue or vice, good or evil, which the Supreme Authority of a Nation declares to be ſo. And this is frequently and confidently aſſerted by the ingenious Author of a very bad Book, I mean the *Leviathan.*

Now the proper way of anſwering any thing that is confidently aſſerted is to ſhew the contrary, namely, That there are ſome things that have a natural evil and deformity in them, as perjury, perfidiouſneſs, unrighteouſneſs and ingratitude, which are things not only condemned by the poſitive laws and conſtitutions of particular Nations and Governments but by the general verdict of humane nature: And that the virtues contrary to theſe have a natural goodneſs and comelineſs in them, and are ſuitable to the common principles and ſentiments of humanity.

And this will moſt evidently appear by putting this ſuppoſition. Suppoſe the reverſe of all that which we now call virtue were ſolemnly enacted, and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, and falſeneſs to a man's word, and all manner of vice and wickedneſs were eſtabliſhed by a Law. I ask now, if the caſe between virtue and vice were thus alter'd, would that which we now call vice in proceſs of time gain the reputation of virtue, and that which we now call virtue grow odious and contemptible to humane nature? If it would not, then is there ſomething in the nature of good and evil, of virtue and vice, which does not depend upon the pleaſure of Authority, nor is ſubject to any arbitrary Conſtitution. But that it would not be thus I am very certain, becauſe no Government could ſubſiſt upon theſe terms. For the very enjoining of fraud and rapine and perjury and breach of truſt doth apparently deſtroy the greateſt end of Government, which is to preſerve men in their rights againſt the encroachments of fraud and violence. And this end being deſtroyed humane ſocieties would preſently fly in pieces and men would neceſſarily fall into a ſtate of war. Which plainly ſhews that virtue and vice are not arbitrary things, but that there is a natural and immutable and eternal reaſon for that which we call goodneſs and virtue, and againſt that which we call vice and wickedneſs.

Thus I have endeavoured to evidence and vindicate this truth. I ſhall only draw an Inference or two from this diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

1. If this diſcourſe be true, then thoſe who are in place of power and authority are peculiarly concerned to maintain the honour of Religion.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of it.

1. Magiſtrates are concerned to maintain the honour of Religion, which doth not only tend to every man's future happineſs, but is the beſt inſtrument of Civil Government and of the temporal proſperity of a Nation. For the whole deſign of it is to procure the private and publick happineſs of mankind, and to reſtrain men from all thoſe things which would make them miſerable and guilty to themſelves, unpeaceable and troubleſome to the world. Religion hath ſo great an influence upon the felicity of men that it ought to be upheld, and the veneration of it maintained, not only out of a juſt dread of the Divine vengeance in another world, but out of regard to the temporal peace and proſperity of men. It will requite all the kindneſs and honour we can do it by the advantages it will bring to Civil Government, and by the bleſſings it will draw down upon it. God hath promiſed that *thoſe that honour him, he will honour*, and in the common courſe of his providence he uſually makes this good, ſo that the civil Authority ought to be very tender of the honour of God and Religion, if for no other reaſon yet out of *reaſon of State*.

It were to be wiſh'd that all men were ſo piouſly diſpoſed, that Religion by its own authority and the reaſonable force of it might be ſufficient to eſtabliſh its Empire in the minds of men. But the corruptions of men will always make a ſtrong oppoſition againſt it. And therefore at the firſt planting of the Chriſtian Religion in the world God was pleaſed to accompany it with a miraculous power: But after it was planted this extraordinary power ceaſed, and God hath now left it to be maintained and ſupported by more ordinary and humane ways, by the countenance of Authority, and aſſiſtance of Laws; which were never more neceſſary than in this degenerate age, which is prodigiouſly ſunk into Atheiſm and prophaneneſs, and is running headlong into an humour of ſcoffing at God and Religion and every thing that is ſacred. For ſome ages before the Reformation Atheiſm was confined to *Italy*, and had its chief reſidence at *Rome*. All the mention that is of it in the Hiſtory of thoſe times the Papiſts themſelves give us in the lives of their own Popes and Cardinals, excepting two or three ſmall Philoſophers that were retainers to that Court. So that this Atheiſtical humour among Chriſtians was the ſpawn of the groſs ſuperſtitions and corrupt manners of the *Romiſh* Church and Court. And indeed nothing is more natural than for extremes in Religion to beget one another, like the vibrations of a *pendulum* which the more violently you ſwing it one way the farther it will return the other. But in the laſt age, Atheiſm travell'd over the *Alps* and infected *France*, and now of late it hath croſſed the Seas and invaded our Nation and hath prevailed to amazement: For I do not think that there are any people in the World that are generally more indiſpoſed to it and can worſe brook it, ſeriouſneſs and zeal in Religion being almoſt the natural temper of the *Engliſh*. So that nothing is to me matter of greater wonder, than that in a grave and ſober Nation prophaneneſs ſhould ever come to gain ſo much ground, and the beſt and the wiſeſt Religion in the world to be made the ſcorn of fools. For beſides the prophane and atheiſtical diſcourſes about God and Religion, and the bold and ſenſeleſs abuſes of this *ſacred Book* the great inſtruments of our ſalvation, which are ſo frequent in the publick places of reſort; I ſay, beſides theſe (I ſpeak it knowingly) a man can hardly paſs the ſtreets without having his ears grated and pierced with ſuch horrid and blaſphemous oaths and curſes as are enough, if we were guilty of no other ſin, to ſink a Nation. And this not only from the *Tribe* that wear Liveries, but from thoſe that go before them and ſhould give better example. Is it not then high time that the Laws ſhould provide by the moſt prudent and effectual means to curb theſe bold and inſolent defiers of Heaven, who take a pride in being monſters, and boaſt themſelves in the follies and deformities of humane nature? The Heathens would never ſuffer their Gods to be reviled, which yet were no Gods. And ſhall it among the profeſſors of the true Religion be allowed to any man to make a mock of Him that made Heaven and Earth, and to breathe out blaſphemies againſt Him who gives us life and breath and all things? I doubt not but hypocriſy is a great wickedneſs and very odious to God, but by no means of ſo pernicious example as open prophaneneſs. Hypocriſy is a more modeſt way of ſinning, it ſhews ſome reverence to Religion, and does ſo far own the worth and excellency of it as to acknowledge that it deſerves to be counterfeited: Whereas prophaneneſs declares openly againſt it, and endeavours to make a party to drive it out of the world.

2. It concerns every one to live in the practice of Religion and Virtue; Becauſe the publick happineſs and proſperity depends upon it. It is moſt apparent that of late years Religion is very ſenſibly declin'd among us. The manners of men have almoſt been univerſally corrupted by a Civil War. We ſhould therefore all jointly endeavour to retrieve the ancient virtue of the Nation, and to bring into faſhion again that ſolid and ſubſtantial, that plain and unaffected piety, (free from the extremes both of ſuperſtition and enthuſiaſm) which flouriſhed in the age of our immediate Forefathers. Which did not conſiſt in idle talk but in real effects, in a ſincere love of God and of our neighbour, in a pious devotion and reverence towards the Divine Majeſty, and in the virtuous actions of a good life; in the denial of *ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and *in living ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in this preſent world.* This were the true way to reconcile God to us, to ſtop the courſe of his judgments, and to bring down the bleſſings of Heaven upon us.

God hath now been pleaſed to ſettle us again in peace both at home and abroad, and he hath put us once more into the hands of our own counſel. Life and Death, bleſſing and curſing, proſperity and deſtruction are before us. We may chuſe our own fortune, and if we be not wanting to our ſelves we may under the influences of God's grace and aſſiſtance, which is never wanting to our ſincere endeavours, become a happy and a proſperous People.

The good God make us all wiſe to know and to do the things that belong to the temporal peace and proſperity of the Nation, and to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of every one of our ſouls; which we humbly beg for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, to whom, &c.

SERMON IV.

The Advantages of Religion to particular Perſons.

PSALM XIX. 11.

And in keeping of them there is great reward.

IN this *Pſalm David* celebrates the glory of God from the conſideration of the greatneſs of his Works, and the perfection of his Laws. From the greatneſs of his Works, *verſe* 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-work*, &c. From the perfection of his Laws, *ver.* 7. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul*, &c. And among many other excellencies of the Divine Laws, he mentions in the laſt place the benefits and advantages which come from the obſervance of them, *verſe* 11. *and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

I have already ſhown how much Religion tends to the publick welfare of mankind; to the ſupport of Government, and to the peace and happineſs of humane Societies. My work at this time ſhall be to ſhew that Religion and obedience to the Laws of God do likewiſe conduce to the happineſs of particular perſons, both in reſpect of this world and the other. For though there be but little expreſs mention made in the *Old Teſtament* of the immortality of the Soul and the rewards of another life, yet all Religion does ſuppoſe theſe principles, and is built upon them.

I. And *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew how Religion conduceth to the happineſs of this life; and that both in reſpect of the inward and outward man.

Firſt, As to the mind; to be pious and religious brings a double advantage to the mind of man. 1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings. 2. It brings peace and pleaſure to our minds.

1. It tends to the improvement of our underſtandings. I do not mean only that it inſtructs us in the knowledge of divine and ſpiritual things, and makes us to underſtand the great intereſt of our ſouls and the concernments of eternity better, but that in general it does raiſe and enlarge the minds of men and make them more capable of true knowledge. And in this ſenſe
Pſal. 19 8. I underſtand the following Texts; *The commandment of the Lord is pure,*
Pſal. 111. 10. *enlightning the eyes*; *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom, a good*
underſtanding have all they that keep his commandments; *Thou through thy com-*
Pſal. 119. 98. *mandments haſt made me wiſer than mine enemies*, which plainly refers to
ver. 99. political prudence; *I have more underſtanding than all my teachers, for thy*
Teſtimonies are my meditation, I underſtand more than the ancients, becauſe I
ver. 104. *keep thy precepts*; *Through thy precepts I get underſtanding*; *The entrance of*
ver. 130. *thy word giveth light, it giveth underſtanding to the ſimple.*

Now Religion doth improve the underſtandings of men by ſubduing their luſts, and moderating their paſſions. The luſts and paſſions of men do ſully and darken their minds, even by a natural influence. Intemperance and ſenſuality and fleſhly luſts do debaſe mens minds, and clog their ſpirits, make them groſs and foul, liſtleſs and unactive; they ſink us down into ſenſe, and glew us to theſe low and inferior things like *birdlime*; they hamper and entangle our ſouls, and hinder their flight upwards; they indiſpoſe and unfit our minds for the moſt noble and intellectual conſiderations. So likewiſe the exorbitant paſſions of wrath and malice, envy and revenge, do darken and diſtort the underſtandings of men, do tincture the mind with falſe colours and fill it with prejudice and undue apprehenſions of things.

There is no man that is intemperate, or luſtful, or paſſionate, but beſides the guilt he contracts which is continually fretting and diſquieting his mind, beſides the inconveniences he brings upon himſelf as to his health, he does likewiſe ſtain and obſcure the brightneſs of his Soul and the clearneſs of his diſcerning faculty. Such perſons have not that free uſe of their reaſon that they might have; their underſtandings are not bright enough, nor their ſpirits pure and fine enough for the exerciſe of the higheſt and nobleſt acts of reaſon. What clearneſs is to the eye that purity is to our mind and underſtanding, and as the clearneſs of the bodily eye doth diſpoſe it for a quicker ſight of material objects, ſo doth the purity of our minds, that is, freedom from luſt and paſſion, diſpoſe us for the cleareſt and moſt perfect acts of reaſon and underſtanding.

Now Religion doth purify our minds and refine our ſpirits by quenching the fire of luſt and ſuppreſſing the fumes and vapours of it, and by ſcattering the clouds and miſts of paſſion. And the more any man's ſoul is cleanſed from the filth and dregs of ſenſual luſts the more nimble and expedite it will be in its operations. The more any man conquers his paſſions, the more calm and ſedate his ſpirit is, and the greater equality he maintains in his temper, his apprehenſions of things will be the more clear and unprejudic'd, and his judgment more firm and ſteddy. And this is the meaning of that ſaying of *Solomon*, *He that is ſlow to wrath is of great underſtanding, but he that is haſty of ſpirit exalteth folly. Ira furor brevis eſt* —— Anger is a ſhort fit of madneſs, and he that is paſſionate and furious deprives himſelf of his reaſon, ſpoils his underſtanding, and helps to make himſelf a fool: whereas he that conquers his paſſions and keeps them under, doth thereby preſerve and improve his underſtanding. Freedom from irregular paſſions doth not only ſignify that a man is wiſe, but really contributes to the making of him ſuch.

2. Religion tends to the eaſe and pleaſure, the peace and tranquility of our minds; wherein happineſs chiefly conſiſts and which all the wiſdom and Philoſophy of the world did always aim at, as the utmoſt felicity of this life. And that this is the natural fruit of a religious and virtuous courſe of
life, the Scripture declares to us in theſe Texts; *Light is ſown for the righ-* Pſal. 97.
teous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart; *Great peace have all they that love* 11.
thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them; *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and* Pſal. 119. 165.
all her paths are peace; *The fruit of righteouſneſs is peace, and the effect of righ-* Prov. 3.17.
teouſneſs quietneſs and aſſurance for ever; The plain ſenſe of which Texts Iſa. 32.17.
is, that pleaſure and peace do naturally reſult from a holy and good life. When a man hath once engag'd himſelf in a Religious courſe, and is habituated to piety and holineſs, all the exerciſes of Religion and devotion, all acts of goodneſs and virtue are delightful to him. To honour and worſhip God, to pray to him and to praiſe him, to ſtudy his will, to meditate upon him and to love him, all theſe bring great pleaſure and peace along with them. What greater contentment and ſatisfaction can there be to the mind of man, when it is once purifi'd and refin'd from the dregs of ſenſual pleaſures and delights, and rais'd to its true height and pitch, than to con-

template and admire the infinite excellencies and perfections of God, to adore his greatneſs and to love his goodneſs? How can the thoughts of God be troubleſome to any one who lives ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in the world? No man that loves goodneſs and righteouſneſs hath any reaſon to be afraid of God, or to be diſquieted with the thoughts of him. There is nothing in God that is terrible to a good man, but all the apprehenſions which we naturally have of him ſpeak comfort and promiſe happineſs to ſuch a one. The conſideration of his attributes is ſo far from being a trouble to him that it is his recreation and delight. It is for wicked men to dread God and to endeavour to baniſh the thoughts of him out of their minds; but a holy and virtuous man may have quiet and undiſturb'd thoughts even of the juſtice of God, becauſe the terror of it doth not concern him.

Now Religion doth contribute to the peace and quiet of our minds theſe two ways. *Firſt*, By allaying thoſe paſſions which are apt to ruffle and diſcompoſe our ſpirits. Malice and hatred, wrath and revenge are very fretting and vexatious and apt to make our minds ſore and uneaſy, but he that can moderate theſe affections will find a ſtrange eaſe and pleaſure in his own ſpirit. *Secondly*, by freeing us from the anxieties of guilt, and the fears of divine wrath and diſpleaſure; than which nothing is more ſtinging and tormenting and renders the life of man more miſerable and unquiet. And what a ſpring of peace and joy muſt it needs be to apprehend upon good grounds that God is reconcil'd to us and become our friend; that all our ſins are perfectly forgiven and ſhall never more be remembred againſt us! What unexpreſſible comfort does overflow the pious and devout ſoul from the remembrance of a holy and well-ſpent life and a conſcience of its own innocency and integrity! And nothing but the practice of Religion and Virtue can give this eaſe and ſatisfaction to the mind of man. For there is a certain kind of temper and diſpoſition which is neceſſary to the pleaſure and quiet of our minds, and conſequently to our happineſs: and that is holineſs and goodneſs, which as it is the perfection ſo is it likewiſe the happineſs of the Divine nature: And on the contrary, the chief part of the miſery of wicked men, and of thoſe accurſed ſpirits the Devils is this, that they are of a diſpoſition contrary to God; they are envious and malicious and cruel, and of ſuch a temper as is naturally a torment and diſquiet to itſelf. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil diſpoſition of mens minds; and till this be cur'd, which can only be done by Religion, it is as impoſſible for a man to be happy, that is, pleas'd and contented within himſelf, as it is for a ſick man to be at eaſe. Becauſe ſuch a man hath that within him which torments him, and he cannot be at eaſe till that be remov'd. The man's ſpirit is out of order and off the hinges, and till that be put into its right frame he will be perpetually diſquieted and can find no reſt within himſelf. The *Prophet* very fitly deſcribes to us the unquiet condition of wicked men, *The wicked is like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt; there is no peace (ſaith my God) to the wicked.* So long as ſin and corruption abound in our hearts they will be reſtleſly working, like wine which will be in a perpetual motion and agitation till it have purg'd it ſelf of its dregs and foulneſs.

Iſa. 57. 20, 21.

Secondly, Religion does likewiſe tend to the happineſs of the outward man. Now the bleſſings of this kind are ſuch as either reſpect our *health*, or *eſtate*, or *reputation*, or relations; and in reſpect of all theſe Religion is highly advantageous to us.

1. As to our health, a Religious and virtuous life doth eminently conduce to that, and to long life as a conſequent of it. And in this ſenſe I underſtand

theſe following Texts; *My Son forget not my Law, but let thy heart keep my* Prov. 3. 1, 2. *Commandments; for length of days, and long life, ſhall they add to thee*; and v. 7, and 8. *Fear the Lord and depart from evil, it ſhall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones*; and v. 16. among the temporal advantages of wiſdom or Religion this is mention'd as the firſt and principal, *length of days is in her right hand*; and v. 18. *ſhe is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her*; and again, *Whoſo findeth me, findeth life, but he that ſinneth againſt me wrong-* Prov. 8. 35, 36. *eth his own ſoul*; (that is, injurious to his own life) *all they that hate me love death*; all which is undoubtedly true in a ſpiritual ſenſe, but is certainly meant by *Solomon* in the natural ſenſe. And theſe promiſes, of the bleſſings of health and long life to good men are not only declaratory of the good pleaſure and intention of God towards them, but likewiſe of the natural tendency of the thing. For Religion doth oblige men to the practice of thoſe virtues which do in their own nature conduce to the preſervation of our health, and the lengthening of our days; ſuch as temperance and chaſtity and moderation of our paſſions. And the contrary vices to theſe do apparently tend to the impairing of mens health and the ſhortning of their days. How many have waſted and conſum'd their bodies by luſt, and brought grievous pains and mortal diſeaſes upon themſelves! See how the wiſe man deſcribes the ſad conſequences of this ſin, *He goes as an Oxe to the ſlaughter,* Prov. 7. 22, 23. *till a dart ſtrike through his Liver; as a Bird haſteneth to the ſnare, and knoweth not that it is for his life*; and v. 25, 26, 27. *Let not thy heart decline to her ways, go not aſtray in her paths; for ſhe hath caſt down many wounded; yea many ſtrong men have been ſlain by her; her houſe is the way to Hell* (that is to the grave) *going down to the chambers of death*. How many have been ruin'd by intemperance and exceſs, and moſt unnaturally have perverted thoſe bleſſings which God hath given for the ſupport of nature to the overthrow and deſtruction of it? How often hath mens malice and envy and diſcontent againſt others terminated in a cruel revenge upon themſelves? How many by the wild fury and extravagancy of their own paſſions, have put their bodies into a combuſtion, and fir'd their ſpirits; and by ſtirring up their rage and choler againſt others have arm'd that fierce humour againſt themſelves?

2. As to our eſtates, Religion is likewiſe a mighty advantage to men in that reſpect. Not only in regard of God's more eſpecial providence and peculiar bleſſing which uſually attends good men in their undertakings and crowns them with good ſucceſs, but alſo from the nature of the thing. And this, I doubt not, is the meaning of thoſe expreſſions of the *Wiſe man* concerning the temporal benefits and advantages of wiſdom or Religion; *In her left hand are riches and honour; They that love me ſhall inherit ſubſtance,* Pro. 3. 16. *and I will fill their treaſures*; Pro. 8. 21. and this Religion principally does, by charging men with truth and fidelity and juſtice in their dealings, which are a ſure way of thriving and will hold out when all fraudulent arts and devices will fail. And this alſo *Solomon* obſerves to us; *He that walketh uprightly* Pro. 10. 9. *walketh ſurely, but he that perverteth his way ſhall be known*; his indirect dealing will be diſcover'd one time or other, and then loſes his reputation, and his intereſt ſinks. Falſhood and deceit only ſerve a preſent turn, and the conſequence of them is pernicious; but truth and fidelity are a laſting advantage; *The righteous hath an everlaſting foundation; The lip of truth is* Pro. 10. 5; *eſtabliſhed for ever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment*. Prov. 12. 19. And Religion does likewiſe engage men to diligence and induſtry in their Callings, and how much this conduces to the advancement of mens fortunes daily experience teaches, and the *Wiſe-man* hath told us, *The diligent hand makes rich*; Pro. 10. 4. and again,

Prov. 22. 29. again, *Seeſt thou a man diligent in buſineſs, he ſhall ſtand before Princes, he ſhall not ſtand before mean perſons.*

And where men by reaſon of the difficult circumſtances of their condition cannot arrive to any eminency of eſtate, yet Religion makes a compenſation for this by teaching men to be contented with that moderate and competent fortune which God hath given them. For the ſhorteſt way to be rich is not by enlarging our eſtates, but by contracting our deſires. What *Seneca* ſays of Philoſophy, is much more true of Religion, *præſtat opes ſapientia, quas cuicunque fecit ſupervacuas dedit*, it makes all thoſe rich to whom it makes riches ſuperfluous, and they are ſo to thoſe who are taught by Religion to be contented with ſuch a portion of them as God's Providence hath thought fit to allot to them.

3. As to our reputation. There is nothing gives a man a more firm and eſtabliſh'd reputation among wiſe and ſerious perſons (whoſe judgment is only valuable) than a prudent and ſubſtantial Piety. This doth many times command reverence and eſteem from the worſer ſort of men, and ſuch as are no great friends to Religion; and ſometimes the force of truth will extort an acknowledgment of its excellency, even from its greateſt enemies. I know very well that good men may, and often do, blemiſh the reputation of their piety by over-acting ſome things in Religion; by an indiſcreet zeal about things wherein Religion is not concerned, by an ungrateful auſterity and ſowreneſs which Religion doth not require; by little affectations, and an imprudent oſtentation of devotion; but a ſubſtantial and ſolid, a diſcreet and unaffected piety, which makes no great noiſe and ſhow, but expreſſes itſelf in a conſtant and ſerious devotion, and is accompanied with the fruits of goodneſs and kindneſs and righteouſneſs towards men, will not only give a man a credit and value among the ſober and the virtuous, but even among the vicious and more degenerate ſort of men. Upon this account it is that the Apoſtle adviſeth Chriſtians, if they would recommend themſelves to the eſteem of God and men, earneſtly to mind the weighty and ſubſtantial parts of Religion; *Let not then your good be evil ſpoken of; for the Kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt; for he that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt is acceptable to God, and approved of men.*

It is true indeed, there are ſome perſons of ſo profligate a temper, and of ſuch an inveterate enmity to all goodneſs, as to ſcorn and reproach even Religion and Virtue itſelf. But the reproach of ſuch perſons does not really wound a man's reputation. For why ſhould any man be troubled at the contumelies of thoſe whoſe judgment deſerves not to be valued, who deſpiſe goodneſs and good men out of malice and ignorance? If theſe reproaches which they caſt upon them were the cenſures of wiſe and ſober men, a man's reputation might be concern'd in them; but they are the raſh words of inconſiderate and injudicious men, the extravagant ſpeeches of thoſe who are unexperienc'd in the things they ſpeak againſt; and therefore no wiſe man will be troubled at them, or think either Religion or himſelf diſparaged by them.

4. As to our Relations. Religion alſo conduceth to the happineſs of theſe, as it derives a large and extenſive bleſſing upon all that belongs to us; the goodneſs of God being ſo diffuſive as to ſcatter his bleſſings *round about the habitations of the juſt*, and *to ſhew mercy unto thouſands of them that love him and keep his Commandments.* So *David* tells us, *Bleſſed is the man that feareth* Pſal. 112. 1, 2, 3. *the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his Commandments. His ſeed ſhall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright ſhall be bleſſed. Wealth and riches*

riches are in his houſe, and his righteouſneſs endureth for ever. And ſo *Solomon*;
A good man leaveth an inheritance to his Childrens Children; and again, *In* Prov. 13. 22.
the fear of the Lord is ſtrong confidence, and his Children ſhall have a place of Prov. 14. 26.
refuge. But the wicked derives a curſe upon all that is related to him, he is
ſaid *to trouble his own houſe*; and again, *The wicked are overthrown and are* Prov. 11. 29.
not, but the houſe of the righteous ſhall ſtand. Pro. 12. 7.

But ſetting aſide the conſideration of God's Providence, Religion doth likewiſe in its own nature tend to the welfare of thoſe who are related to us; becauſe it lays the ſtricteſt obligations upon men to take care of their Families and Relations, and to make the beſt proviſion both for their comfortable ſubſiſtence here in this world and their ſalvation in the next. And thoſe who neglect thoſe duties, the Scripture is ſo far from eſteeming them Chriſtians that it accounts them worſe than Heathens and Infidels, *He that* 1 Tim. 5. 8. *provideth not for his own, eſpecially thoſe of his own houſe, is worſe than an Infidel, and hath denied the faith.* This I know is ſpoken in reſpect of temporal proviſion, but it holds *à fortiori* as to the care of their ſouls.

Beſides, it is many times ſeen that the poſterity of holy and good men, eſpecially of ſuch as have evidenc'd their piety towards God by bounty and charity to men, have met with unuſual kindneſs and reſpect from others, and have by a ſtrange and ſecret diſpoſition of Divine providence been unexpectedly car'd and provided for; and that, as they have all the reaſon in the world to believe, upon the account and for the ſake of the piety and charity of their Parents. This *David* tells us from his own particular obſervation; *I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not ſeen the righteous* Pſ. 37. 25. *forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread.* And that by the *righteous* is here meant the *good and merciful man* appears from the deſcription of him in the next words, *He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his ſeed is bleſſed.* Ver. 26. And on the contrary, the poſterity of the wicked do many times inherit the fruit of their fathers ſins and vices; and that not only by a juſt judgment of God, but from the natural courſe and conſequence of things. And in this ſenſe that expreſſion in *Job* is often verified, that *God lays up the iniquity of wicked men* Job 21. 19. *for their Children.* And doth not experience teſtify that the intemperate and unjuſt do many times tranſmit their bodily infirmities and diſeaſes to their Children, and entail a ſecret curſe upon their eſtates, which does either inſenſibly waſte and conſume it, or eat out the heart and comfort of it? Thus you ſee how Religion in all reſpects conduces to the happineſs of this life.

II. Religion and Virtue do likewiſe moſt certainly and directly tend to the eternal happineſs and ſalvation of men in the other world. And this is incomparably the greateſt advantage that redounds to men by being Religious, in compariſon of which all temporal conſiderations *are leſs than nothing and vanity.* The worldly advantages that Religion brings to men in this preſent life are a ſenſible recommendation of Religion even to the loweſt and meaneſt ſpirits: But to thoſe who are rais'd above ſenſe and aſpire after immortality, who believe the perpetual duration of their ſouls and the reſurrection of their bodies; to thoſe who are throughly convinc'd of the inconſiderableneſs of this ſhort dying life and of all the concernments of it, in compariſon of that eternal ſtate which remains for us in another life; to theſe, I ſay, the conſideration of a future happineſs and of thoſe unſpeakable and everlaſting rewards which ſhall then be given to holineſs and virtue, is certainly the moſt powerful motive and the moſt likely to prevail upon them. For thoſe who are perſuaded that they ſhall continue for ever cannot chuſe but aſpire after a happineſs commenſurate to their duration, nor can any thing that is conſcious to its ſelf of its own immortality be ſatisfied and contented with any thing leſs than the hopes of an endleſs felicity. And this hope Religion alone gives men, and the Chriſtian Religion only can ſettle men in a firm and unſhaken aſſurance of it. But becauſe all men who have entertain'd any Religion have conſented to theſe principles, of the *immortality of the ſoul* and the *recompences of another world*, and have always promis'd to themſelves ſome rewards of piety and virtue after this life; and becauſe I did more particularly deſign from this *Text* to ſpeak of the temporal benefits and advantages which redound to men from Religion, therefore I ſhall content my ſelf to ſhew very briefly how a religious and virtuous life doth conduce to our future happineſs. And that upon theſe two accounts; from the promiſe of God, and from the nature of the thing.

1 Tim. 4. 8. 1. From the promiſe of God. *Godlineſs* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *hath the promiſe of the life that is to come*. God hath all along in the Scripture ſuſpended the promiſe of eternal life upon this condition. He hath peremptorily declar'd that without obedience and holineſs of life no man ſhall ever ſee the Lord. And this very thing, that it is the conſtitution and appointment of God, might be argument enough to us (if there were no other) to convince us of the neceſſity of obeying the Laws of God in order to our happineſs, and to perſuade us thereunto. For eternal life is the gift of God, and he may do what he will with his own. He is maſter of his own favours and may diſpence them upon what terms and conditions he pleaſes. But it is no hard condition that he hath impoſed upon us. If Religion brought no advantages to us in this world, yet the happineſs of heaven is ſo great as will abundantly recompence all our pains and endeavours; there is temptation enough in the reward to engage any man in the work. Had God thought fit to have impos'd the moſt grievous and difficult things upon us, ought we not to have ſubmitted to them and to have undertaken them with cheerfulneſs upon ſuch great and glorious encouragements? As *Naaman*'s ſervants ſaid to him in another caſe, *Had he bid thee do ſome great thing wouldeſt thou not have done it?* So if God had ſaid that without poverty and actual martyrdom *no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, would not any man that believes heaven and hell and underſtands what theſe words ſignify and what it is to eſcape extreme and eternal miſery, and to enjoy unſpeakable and endleſs glory, have been willing to accept theſe conditions? *How much more, when he hath only ſaid, Waſh and be clean*; and *Let every man that hath this hope in Him, purify himſelf as he is pure?* But God hath not dealt thus with us, nor is the impoſing of this condition of eternal life a mere arbitrary conſtitution, therefore I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

2*dly*, That a Religious and Holy life doth from the very nature and reaſon of the thing conduce to our future happineſs, by way of neceſſary diſpoſition and preparation of us for it. We cannot be otherwiſe happy but by our conformity to God, without this we cannot poſſibly love him nor find any pleaſure or happineſs in communion with him. For we cannot love a nature contrary to our own, nor delight to converſe with it. Therefore Religion, in order to the fitting of us for the happineſs of the next life, does deſign to mortify our luſts and paſſions, and to reſtrain us from the inordinate love of the groſs and ſenſual delights of this world; to call off our minds from theſe inferior things, and to raiſe them to higher and more ſpiritual objects, that we may be diſpoſed for the happineſs of the other world, and taught not to reliſh the delights of it; whereas ſhould we ſet our hearts only upon theſe things, and be able to taſte no pleaſure in any thing but what is ſenſual and earthly, we muſt needs be extremely miſerable when we come into the other world, becauſe we ſhould meet with nothing to entertain our ſelves withal, no employment ſuitable to our diſpoſition, no pleaſure that would agree with our deprav'd appetites and vicious inclinations. All that Heaven and Happineſs ſignifies is unſuitable to a wicked man, and therefore could be no felicity to him. But this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more fully to in my laſt Diſcourſe.

From all that hath been ſaid, the reaſonableneſs of Religion clearly appears which tends ſo directly to the happineſs of men, and is upon all accounts calculated for our benefit. Let but all things be truly conſidered and caſt up and it will be found that there is no advantage to any man from an irreligious and vicious courſe of life. I challenge any one to inſtance in any real benefit that ever came to him this way. Let the ſinner declare what he hath found by experience. Hath lewdneſs and intemperance been more for his health than if he had liv'd chaſtly and ſoberly? Hath falſhood and injuſtice prov'd at the long run more for the advancement and ſecurity of his eſtate than truth and honeſty would have done? Hath any vice that he hath lived in made him more true friends, and gain'd him a better reputation in the world than the practice of holineſs and virtue would have done? Hath he found *that* peace and ſatisfaction of mind in an evil courſe, and *that* quiet enjoyment of himſelf, and comfortable aſſurance of God's favour, and good hopes of his future condition, which a religious and virtuous life would have given him? Nay on the contrary, have not ſome of his vices weaken'd his body and broken his health, have not others diſſipated his eſtate, and reduc'd him to want? What notorious vice is there that doth not blemiſh a man's reputation, and make him either hated or deſpis'd, and that not only by the wiſe and the virtuous but even by the generality of men? But was ever any wicked man free from the ſtings of a guilty conſcience and the torment of a reſtleſs and uneaſy mind, from the ſecret dread of Divine diſpleaſure, and of the vengeance of another world? Let the ſinner freely ſpeak the very inward ſenſe of his ſoul in this matter, and ſpare not; and I doubt not, if he will deal clearly and impartially, but that he will acknowledge all this to be true, and is able to confirm it from his own ſad experience. For this is the natural fruit of ſin and the preſent revenge which it takes upon ſinners, beſides that fearful puniſhment which ſhall be inflicted on them in another life.

What reaſon then can any man pretend againſt Religion, when it is ſo apparently for the benefit not only of humane ſociety but of every particular perſon; when there is no real intereſt of this world but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and purſued to as great advantage, nay uſually to far greater, by a man that *lives ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in the world*, than by any one that leads the contrary courſe of life? Let no man then ſay, with thoſe prophane perſons whom the *Prophet* ſpeaks of, *It is in vain to ſerve the Lord, and what profit is it that we have kept his Commandments?* Mal. 3.14. God has not been ſo hard a maſter to us that we have reaſon thus to complain of him. He hath given us no Laws but what are for our good, nay ſo gracious hath he been to us as to link together our duty and our intereſt, and to make thoſe very things the inſtances of our obedience which are the natural means and cauſes of our happineſs. The Devil was ſo far in the right, when he charg'd *Job* that he did not *ſerve God for nought*. 'Tis he himſelf that is the hard maſter and makes men ſerve him for nought, who rewards his drudges and ſlaves with nothing but ſhame and ſorrow and miſery. But God requires no man's ſervice upon hard and unreaſonable terms. The greateſt part of our work is a preſent reward to itſelf, and for whatever elſe we do or ſuffer for him, he offers us abundant conſideration. And if men did but truly and wiſely love themſelves they would upon this very ground if there were no other, become Religious. For when all is done there is no man can ſerve his own intereſt better than by ſerving God. Religion conduceth both to our preſent and future happineſs, and when the Goſpel chargeth us with piety towards God, and juſtice and charity towards men, and temperance and chaſtity in reference to our ſelves, the true interpretation of theſe Laws is this, God requires of men in order to their eternal happineſs that they ſhould do thoſe things which tend to their temporal welfare, that is, in plainer words, he promiſes to make us happy for ever upon condition that we will but do that which is beſt for our ſelves in this world. To conclude, Religion is founded in the intereſt of men rightly apprehended. So that if *the God of this world* and the luſts of men did not *blind their eyes*, ſo as to render them unfit to diſcern their true intereſt, it would be impoſſible, ſo long as men love themſelves and deſire their own happineſs to keep them from being religious; for they could not but conclude that to be their intereſt, and being ſo convinc'd they would reſolve to purſue it and ſtick to it.

SERMON V.

The Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion.

PHIL. III. 8.

Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.

IN the beginning of this Chapter the *Apoſtle* makes a compariſon between the *Jewiſh* and the Chriſtian Religion, and ſhews the Chriſtian to be in truth and ſubſtance what the *Jewiſh* was only in type and ſhadow, v. 3. *We are the Circumciſion which worſhip God in the ſpirit.* And then he enumerates the ſeveral priviledges he was partaker of by virtue of his being born in the *Jewiſh* Church, v. 4, 5, 6. *Though I might alſo have confidence in the fleſh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might truſt in the fleſh, I more; circumciſed the eighth day, of the ſtock of Iſrael,* &c. And yet he tells us he was contented to forgo all theſe advantages for Chriſt and the Chriſtian Religion, v. 7. *But what things were gain to me those I counted loſs for Chriſt.* And not only theſe, but if there were any thing elſe that men value in this world he was willing to hazard that alſo upon the ſame account, v. 8. *Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord.*

In which words the Apoſtle declares the high eſteem he had for the Chriſtian Religion which he calls the *knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus* his *Lord*; the excellency whereof appear'd ſo great to him that he valued nothing in compariſon of the advantages which he had by the knowledge of it.

My deſign at this time from this Text is to repreſent the excellency of this knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion above that of any other Religion or Inſtitution in the world. And here I ſhall not conſider the external evidence which we have of the truth of Chriſtianity and of the Divinity of its doctrine, in which reſpect it hath incomparably the advantage of any other Religion: but only the internal excellency of the Doctrine itſelf, abſtracting from the Divine authority of it: And that in theſe four reſpects:

Firſt, As it does more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, which is the great foundation of all Religion.

Secondly, As it gives us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives.

Thirdly, As it propounds to us more powerful Arguments to perſuade men to the obedience of this Law.

Fourthly, As it furniſhes us with better motives and conſiderations to patience and contentedneſs under the evils and afflictions of this life. Now theſe are the greateſt advantages that any Religion can have, To give men right apprehenſions of God, a perfect rule of good life, and efficacious arguments to perſuade men to be good, and patiently to bear the evils and ſufferings of this life. And theſe ſhall be the heads of my following diſcourſe.

I. The Chriſtian Religion doth more clearly reveal to us the nature of God, than any Religion ever did. And to have right apprehenſions of God is the great foundation of all Religion. For according as mens notions of God are ſuch will their Religion be. If men have groſs and falſe conceptions of God their Religion will be abſurd and ſuperſtitious. If men fancy God to be an ill-natur'd Being arm'd with infinite power, one that delights in the miſery and ruin of his creatures and is ready to take all advantages againſt them, they may fear him but they will hate him; and they will be apt to be ſuch towards one another as they fancy God to be towards them, for all Religion doth naturally incline men to imitate him whom they worſhip.

Now the Chriſtian Religion gives us a more perfect, and a more lovely character of God than any Religion ever did. It repreſents him to us as a pure ſpirit, (which the Heathens did not generally believe) and that he is to be worſhipp'd in ſuch a manner as is moſt ſuitable to his ſpiritual nature, (which not only the Heathens but even the *Jews* themſelves were extremely miſtaken about) *God is a ſpirit* (ſays our Saviour) *and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth.* It is true indeed God himſelf did command ſacrifices to the *Jews*, and all thoſe external and troubleſome obſervances of which their Religion did conſiſt: But then it is to be conſider'd that he did not inſtitute this way of Worſhip becauſe it was moſt ſuitable to his own nature, but becauſe of the carnality of their hearts and the proneneſs of that people to Idolatry. God did not preſcribe theſe things becauſe they were beſt, but becauſe the temper of that People would then admit of nothing better. And this the Scripture gives us ſeveral intimations of, *Thou* Pſal. 51. 16. *deſireſt not ſacrifice, thou delighteſt not in burnt-offerings,* ſaith *David*: And elſewhere more expreſly to this purpoſe; *I ſpake not unto your Fathers* (ſays Jer. 7. 22. God by the prophet *Jeremiah*) *nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and ſacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, ſaying, Obey my voice:* A ſufficient intimation that God did not primarily intend to appoint this way of worſhip, and to impoſe it upon them as that which was moſt proper and agreeable to him, but that he condeſcended to it as moſt accommodate to their preſent ſtate and inclination. And in this ſenſe alſo ſome underſtand what God ſays to the Ezek. 20. 25. ſame people by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that he *gave them ſtatutes that were not good.*

And as the Chriſtian Religion gives a more perfect, ſo a more amiable and lovely character of the Divine nature. No Religion that ever was in the world does ſo fully repreſent the goodneſs of God and his tender love to mankind, which is the beſt and moſt powerful argument to the love of God. The Heathens did generally dread God, and looked upon him as fierce and cruel and revengeful; and therefore they endeavoured to appeaſe him by the horrid and barbarous ſacrifices of men, and of their own children. And all along in the *Old Teſtament* God is generally repreſented as very ſtrict and ſevere. But there are no where ſo plain and full declarations of his mercy and love to the ſons of men as are made in the *Goſpel.* In the *Old Teſtament* God is uſually ſtiled *the Lord of Hoſts, the great and the terrible God*: But in the *New Teſtament* he is repreſented to us by milder titles, *the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the father of mercies, and the God of all conſolations; the God of all patience, the God of love and peace*; nay he is ſaid to be *love* itſelf and to *dwell in love.* And this difference between the ſtile of the *Old* and *New Teſtament* is ſo remarkable, that one of the greateſt *Sects* in the Primitive Church (I mean that of the *Gnoſticks*) did upon this very ground found their *hereſy* of two Gods; the *one* evil and fierce and cruel, whom they call'd the God of the *Old Teſtament*; the *other* good and kind and merciful, whom they call'd the God of the *New*. So great a difference is there between the repreſentations which are made of God in the Books of the *Jewiſh* and the Chriſtian Religion, as to give at leaſt ſome colour and pretence for an imagination of two Gods.

II. Chriſtian Religion hath given us a more certain and perfect Law for the government of our lives. It hath made our duty more plain and certain in many inſtances, than either the Philoſophy of the *Heathen*, or the precepts of *Moſes* had done. It commands univerſal love and kindneſs and good will among men, a readineſs to forgive our greateſt enemies, *to do good to them that hate us*, *to bleſs them that curſe us*, and *to pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us*. And does inculcate theſe precepts more vehemently, and forbid malice and hatred and revenge and contention more ſtrictly and peremptorily than any Religion ever did before: as will appear to any one that does but attentively read our *Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount*.

And as Chriſtianity hath given us a more *certain* ſo likewiſe a more *perfect* Law for the government of our lives. All the precepts of it are reaſonable and wiſe, requiring ſuch duties of us as are ſuitable to the light of nature and do approve themſelves to the beſt reaſon of mankind, ſuch as have their foundation in the nature of God, and are an imitation of the Divine excellencies, ſuch as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to raiſe the minds of men to the higheſt pitch of goodneſs and virtue. The Laws of our Religion are ſuch as are generally uſeful and beneficial to the world, as do tend to the outward peace and the health, to the inward comfort and contentment, and to the univerſal happineſs of mankind. They command nothing that is unneceſſary and burdenſome, as were the numerous rites and ceremonies of the *Jewiſh* Religion, but what is reaſonable, and uſeful, and ſubſtantial: And they omit nothing that may tend to the glory of God or the welfare of men, nor do they reſtrain us in any thing but what is contrary either to the regular inclinations of nature or to our reaſon and true intereſt. They forbid us nothing but what is baſe and unworthy, to ſerve our humours and paſſions, to reproach our underſtandings and to make our ſelves fools and beaſts; in a word, nothing but what tends either to our private harm and prejudice, or to publick diſorder and confuſion.

And that this is the tenor of the Laws of the Goſpel will appear to any one from our *Saviour's* Sermons and Diſcourſes: particularly that upon the Mount; wherein he charges his Diſciples and followers to be humble, and meek, and righteous, and merciful, and pure, and peaceable, and patient under ſufferings and perſecutions, and good and kind to all even to thoſe that are evil and injurious to us, and to endeavour to excel in all goodneſs and virtue. This will appear likewiſe from the Writings of the holy Apoſtles; I will inſtance but in ſome few paſſages in them. St. *Paul* repreſents to us the deſign of the Chriſtian doctrine in a very few words,
but of admirable ſenſe and weight; *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation* Tit. 2. 11,
hath appear'd to all men, teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts 12.
we ſhould live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world. The
ſame Apoſtle makes this the main and fundamental condition of the Covenant of the Goſpel on our part, *Let every one that names the name of Chriſt* 2 Tim. 2.
depart from iniquity. St. *James* deſcribes the Chriſtian doctrine (which he 19.
calls *the wiſdom that is from above*) by theſe characters, *It is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality,*

2 Pet. 1. *partiality, and without hypocriſy.* St. *Peter* calls the Goſpel, *the knowledge of*
3, 4. *him that hath called us to glory and virtue*; *whereby* (ſaith he) *are given unto*
us exceeding great and precious promiſes, that by theſe you might be partakers of
a divine nature having eſcap'd the corruption that is in the world through luſt;
V. 5, 6, 7. and upon this conſideration he exhorts them *to give all diligence to add to*
their faith the ſeveral virtues of a good life, without which he tells them *they*
are barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. I will
conclude with that full and comprehenſive paſſage of St. *Paul* to the *Phi-*
lippians, Whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, (ὅσα σεμνὰ,
whatſoever things are of venerable eſteem) *whatſoever things are juſt,*
whatſoever things are pure (or chaſte) *whatſoever things are lovely, whatſo-*
ever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praiſe,
think on theſe things.

But the perfection and the reaſonableneſs of the Laws of Chriſtianity will moſt plainly appear by taking a brief ſurvey of them. And they may all be referr'd to theſe two general heads. They are either ſuch as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to make men ſingly and perſonally good, or ſuch as tend to the peace and happineſs of humane Society.

Firſt, Such as tend to the perfection of humane nature and to make men good ſingly and perſonally conſider'd. And the precepts of this kind may be diſtributed likewiſe into two ſorts, ſuch as enjoin piety towards God, or ſuch as require the good order and government of our ſelves in reſpect of the enjoyments and pleaſures of this life.

1. Such as enjoin Piety towards God. All the duties of Chriſtian Religion which reſpect God are no other but what natural light prompts men to, excepting the two Sacraments (which are of great uſe and ſignificancy in the Chriſtian Religion) and praying to God in the name and by the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt. For the ſum of natural Religion as it refers more immediately to God is this, That we ſhould inwardly reverence and love God, and that we ſhould expreſs our inward reverence and love of him by external worſhip and adoration, and by our readineſs to receive and obey all the revelations of his will: And that we ſhould teſtify our dependance upon him, and our confidence of his goodneſs, by conſtant prayers and ſupplications to him for mercy and help for our ſelves and others; And that we ſhould acknowledge our obligations to him for the many favours and benefits which every day and every minute we receive from him, by continual praiſes and thankſgivings: And that on the contrary we ſhould not entertain any unworthy thoughts of God, nor give that honour and reverence which is due to him, to any other; that we ſhould not worſhip him in any manner that is either unſuitable to the excellency and perfection of his nature, or contrary to his revealed will; that we ſhould carefully avoid the prophane and irreverent uſe of his Name by curſing, or cuſtomary ſwearing, and take heed of the neglect or contempt of his Worſhip or any thing belonging to it. This is the ſum of the firſt part of natural Religion, and theſe are the general heads of thoſe duties which every man's reaſon tells him he owes to God: And theſe are the very things which the Chriſtian Religion does expreſly require of us, as might be evidenc'd from particular Texts in the *New Teſtament*, So that there is nothing in this part of Chriſtianity but what agrees very well with the reaſon of mankind.

2. Such precepts as require the good order and government of our ſelves in reſpect of the pleaſures and enjoyments of this life. Chriſtian Religion commands whatſoever things are pure and chaſte, all manner of ſobriety and temperance and moderation in reference to our appetites and paſſions;

and forbids whatever is unnatural, and unreaſonable, and unhealthful in
the uſe of pleaſures and of any of God's creatures. Hither belong all thoſe
Texts which require of us that we ſhould *not walk after the fleſh but after* Rom 8 1.
the ſpirit, that we ſhould *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, 2 Cor. 7. 1.
that we ſhould *be holy in all manner of converſation*. St. *John* diſtributes 1 Pet. 1.
the luſts and irregular appetites of men into three kinds, voluptuouſneſs, 15.
covetouſneſs, and ambition, anſwerably to the three ſorts of tempting objects
that are in the world, pleaſures, riches and honours. *All that is in the* 1 Joh. 2.
world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, &c. And 16.
Chriſtianity doth ſtrictly forbid all theſe, *Take heed and beware of Covetouſneſs* Luke 12.
(ſays our Saviour, and he adds this excellent reaſon) *for a man's life* 15.
conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth. It forbids pride
and ambition and vain-glory, and commands humility and modeſty and condeſcenſion
to others; *Learn of me* (ſays our Saviour) *for I am meek and* Mat. 11.
lowly in ſpirit; *Mind not high things, but condeſcend to them that are of low* 29.
degree; *Let nothing be done through vain-glory, but in lowlineſs of mind let* Rom. 12. 16.
each eſteem other better than themſelves. And in reference to ſenſual pleaſures Phil. 2. 3.
it forbids all irregularity and exceſs, and ſtrictly enjoins purity and
temperance; cautioning us *to take heed leſt we be overcharged with ſurfeiting* Luke 21.
and drunkenneſs; charging us *to walk decently as in the day, not in rioting* 36.
and drunkenneſs, not in chambering and wantonneſs; *to abſtain from fleſhly luſts* Rom. 13. 13.
which war againſt the ſoul. Now all theſe precepts do not only tend to beget 1 Pet. 2.
in us ſuch virtues and diſpoſitions as are reaſonable and ſuitable to our nature 11.
and every way for our temporal convenience and advantage, but ſuch
as do likewiſe exceedingly diſpoſe us to piety and religion by purifying our
ſouls from the droſs and filth of ſenſual delights. For covetouſneſs debaſeth
a man's ſpirit, and ſinks it into the earth; intemperance and luſt cloud a
man's underſtanding, and indiſpoſe it for the contemplation of things ſpiritual
and divine. Thus you ſee how the Precepts of Chriſtianity do tend to
the perfection of humane nature, conſidering men ſingly and perſonally.

Secondly, The other ſort of Precepts are ſuch as tend to the peace and happineſs of humane Society. And the reaſon of mankind can deviſe nothing more proper to this end than the Laws of Chriſtianity are. For they command all thoſe virtues which are apt to ſweeten the ſpirits and allay the paſſions and animoſities of men one towards another. They require us *to love our neighbour* (that is every man in the world, even our greateſt enemies) *as our ſelves*. And for this end among others was the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, the Feaſt of love inſtituted: that by commemorating the love of our dying Saviour, who laid down his life for his enemies, we might be put in mind how we ought to love one another.

And by this Law of loving all men even our enemies, Chriſtian Religion diſcovers it ſelf not only to be the moſt innocent and harmleſs, but the moſt generous and beſt-natur'd Inſtitution that ever was in the world. For in purſuance of this general precept it commands us, *to do good to all men*; *if it be poſſible, and as much as in us lies to live peaceably with all men*; to be *kind one to another*, ready to gratify and oblige men; to be *tender-hearted* and compaſſionate towards thoſe that are in want or miſery, and ready to ſupply and relieve them; to ſympathize with one another in our joys and ſorrows, *to mourn with thoſe that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice*; *to bear one another's burdens, and to forbear one another in love*; to be eaſily reconcil'd to them that have offended us, and to be ready to *forgive from our hearts* the greateſt injuries that can be done to us, and that without bounds and limits *even to ſeventy ſeven times*; as our Saviour expreſſeth it.

The Laws of Chriſtianity do likewiſe ſecure both the private intereſts of men and the publick peace, by confirming and enforcing all the dictates of nature concerning Juſtice and Equity, and our doing to others as we would have them to do to us; and by commanding obedience to humane Laws which decide mens rights and ſubmiſſion to government under pain of damnation: And by forbidding whatever is contrary to theſe, violence and oppreſſion, defrauding and over-reaching one another, perfidiouſneſs and treachery, breach of truſts, oaths or promiſes, undutifulneſs to ſuperiors, ſedition and rebellion againſt Magiſtracy and Authority: And if there be any thing elſe that is apt to diſturb the peace of the world and to alienate the affections of men from one another, as ſowreneſs of diſpoſition, and rudeneſs of behaviour, cenſoriouſneſs and ſiniſter interpretation of things, all croſs and diſtaſteful humours, and whatever elſe may render the converſation of men grievous and uneaſy to one another: All theſe are either expreſly, or by clear conſequence and deduction forbidden in the new Teſtament.

And now what could any Religion do more towards the reforming of the diſpoſitions and manners of men? What Laws can be deviſ'd more proper and effectual to advance the nature of man to its higheſt perfection, to procure the tranquility of mens minds and the peace and happineſs of the world, than theſe precepts of Chriſtianity are? Several of which (as thoſe of *loving our enemies*, of *not revenging injuries*, of *rendring good for evil*, &c.) tho they have been eſteem'd reaſonable by ſome of the wiſeſt among the Heathen, yet by reaſon of the degeneracy of the world, and of the obſcurity and uncertainty of humane reaſon, they never obtain'd to have the eſtimation and force of natural Laws. So that we owe to Chriſtianity the diſcovery of the moſt certain and perfect Rule of life that ever the world was acquainted withal.

III. Chriſtian Religion propounds the moſt powerful arguments to perſuade men to the obedience of theſe Laws. The Goſpel offers ſuch conſiderations to us, as are fit to work very forcibly upon two of the moſt ſwaying and governing paſſions in the mind of man, our hopes and our fears. To encourage our hopes it gives us the higheſt aſſurance of the greateſt and moſt laſting happineſs, in caſe of obedience; and to awaken our fear it threatens ſinners with the moſt dreadful and durable torments, in caſe of diſobedience. *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality*, it promiſeth *eternal life: But unto them that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs*, it threatens *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh*. And this is that which makes the doctrine of the Goſpel ſo powerful an inſtrument for the reforming of the world, that it propoſes to men ſuch glorious rewards and ſuch terrible puniſhments as no Religion ever did; and to make the conſideration of them more effectual, it gives us far greater aſſurance of the reality, and certainty of theſe things than ever the world had before. This account the *Apoſtle* gives us of the ſucceſs and efficacy of the Goſpel upon the minds of men, and for this reaſon he calls it *the power of God unto ſalvation*, becauſe therein *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*. Before the revelation of the Goſpel the wickedneſs and impenitency of the Heathen world was a much more excuſable thing, becauſe they were in a great meaſure ignorant of the rewards of another life, and had generally but very uncertain and obſcure apprehenſions of thoſe things which urge men moſt powerfully to forſake their ſins, and are the moſt prevalent arguments

Rom. 2. 7, 8.

Rom. 1. 16, 18.

guments to a good life. So St. *Paul* tells the *Athenians* the moſt knowing among the Heathen, *The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent; becauſe he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.* Acts 17. 30, 31. The Reſurrection of *Jeſus Chriſt* from the dead hath given the world that full aſſurance of another life after this and of a future Judgment which it never had before, for *He* whom God rais'd from the dead did declare and teſtify that *it was he who was ordain'd of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.* Acts 10. 42. And the firm belief of a future Judgment, which ſhall *render to every man according to his deeds,* if it be well conſider'd, is to a reaſonable nature the moſt forcible motive of all other to a good life; becauſe it is taken from the conſideration of the greateſt and moſt laſting happineſs and miſery that humane nature is capable of. So that the Laws of Chriſtianity have the firmeſt ſanction of any Laws in the world to ſecure the obedience and obſervance of them: For what can reſtrain men from ſin if the terrors of the Lord and the evident danger of eternal deſtruction will not? What encouragement can be given to goodneſs beyond the hopes of Heaven and the aſſurance of an endleſs felicity?

IV. The Chriſtian Religion furniſheth us with the beſt motives and conſiderations to patience and contentedneſs under the evils and afflictions of this life. This was one great deſign of Philoſophy, to ſupport men under the evils and calamities which this life is incident to, and to fortify their ſpirits againſt ſufferings. And to this end the wiſeſt among the Heathens rack'd their wits and caſt about every way, they advanc'd all ſorts of principles and manag'd every little argument and conſideration to the utmoſt advantage. And yet after all theſe attempts they have not been able to give any conſiderable comfort and eaſe to the mind of man under any of the great evils and preſſures of this life. *The bed is ſhorter than that a man can ſtretch himſelf upon it, and the covering narrower than that a man can wrap himſelf in it.* All the wiſe ſayings and advices which Philoſophers could muſter up to this purpoſe have prov'd ineffectual to the common people and the generality of mankind, and have help'd only to ſupport ſome few ſtout and obſtinate minds, which without the aſſiſtance of Philoſophy would have held up pretty well of themſelves.

Some of the Philoſophers have run ſo far back for arguments of comfort againſt pain as to call every thing into queſtion, and to *doubt* whether there were any ſuch thing as ſenſe or pain. And yet for all that when any great evil has been upon them, they would *certainly* ſigh and groan as pitifully and cry out as loud as other men.

Others have ſought to eaſe themſelves of all the evil of affliction by diſputing ſubtilly againſt it, and pertinaciouſly maintaining that afflictions are no real evils but only in opinion and imagination, and therefore a wiſe man ought not to be troubled at them. But he muſt be a very wiſe man that can forbear being troubled at things that are very troubleſom. And yet thus *Poſſidonius* (as *Tully* tells us) diſtinguiſh'd, he could not deny pain to be *very troubleſome*, but for all that he was reſolv'd *never to acknowledge it to be an evil.* But ſure it is a very ſlender comfort that relies upon this nice diſtinction between things being *troubleſome* and being *evils,* when all the evil of affliction lies in the trouble it creates to us. But when the beſt that can be is made of this argument, it is good for nothing but to be thrown away as a ſtupid Paradox and againſt the common ſenſe of mankind.

Others have endeavoured to delude their trouble by a graver way of reaſoning, that theſe things are fatal and neceſſary and therefore no body ought to be troubled at them, it being in vain to be troubled at that which we cannot help. And yet perhaps it might as reaſonably be ſaid on the other ſide that this very conſideration, *that a thing cannot be help'd*, is one of the juſteſt cauſes of trouble to a wiſe man. For it were ſome kind of comfort if theſe evils were to be avoided, becauſe then we might be careful to prevent them another time; but if they be neceſſary then my trouble is as fatal as the calamity that occaſions it, and though I know it is in vain to be troubled for that which I cannot help yet I cannot chuſe but be afflicted. It was a ſmart reply that *Auguſtus* made to one that miniſtred this comfort to him of the fatality of things, *Hoc ipſum eſt* (ſays he) *quod me male habet*, this was ſo far from giving any eaſe to his mind that *this was the very thing that troubled him.*

Others have try'd to divert and entertain the troubles of other men by pretty and plauſible *ſayings*, ſuch as this, *That if evils are long they are but light, if ſharp but ſhort*, and a hundred ſuch like. Now I am apt to imagine that it is but a very ſmall comfort that a plain and ordinary man, lying under a ſharp fit of the Stone for a week together, receives from this fine Sentence. For what pleaſure ſoever men that are at eaſe and leiſure may take in being the Authors of witty ſayings, I doubt it is but poor conſolation that a man under great and ſtinging afflictions finds from them.

The beſt moral argument to patience, in my opinion, is the advantage of patience it ſelf. To bear evils as quietly as we can is the way to make them lighter and eaſier. But to toſs and fling and to be reſtleſs is good for nothing but to fret and enrage our pain, to gall our ſores and to make the burthen that is upon us ſit more uneaſy. But this is properly no conſideration of comfort, but an art of managing our ſelves under afflictions ſo as not to make them more grievous than indeed they are.

But now the arguments which Chriſtianity propounds to us are ſuch as are a juſt and reaſonable encouragement to men to bear ſufferings patiently. Our Religion ſets before us not the example of a ſtupid *Stoick*, who had by obſtinate principles harden'd himſelf againſt all ſenſe of pain beyond the common meaſures of humanity, but an example that lies level to all mankind, of a man like our ſelves, that had a tender ſenſe of the leaſt ſuffering Heb.1.22. and yet patiently endur'd the greateſt; of *Jeſus the Author and finiſher of our faith, who for the joy that was ſet before him endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

God thought it expedient that the firſt Chriſtians ſhould by great hardſhips and perſecutions be train'd up for glory, and to animate and encourage them Heb.2.10. hereto the *Captain of our ſalvation was crown'd by ſufferings.* Much more ſhould the conſideration of this pattern arm us with patience againſt the common and ordinary calamities of this life, eſpecially if we conſider his example with this advantage, that tho his ſufferings were wholly undeſerv'd, and not for himſelf but for us, yet he bore them patiently.

But the main conſideration of all is, the glory which ſhall follow our ſufferings as the reward of *them*, if they be for God and his cauſe; and if upon any other innocent account, as reward of our patience. *Our light af-* 2Cor.4.17. *fliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Chriſtian Religion hath ſecur'd us that we ſhall be infinite gainers by our ſufferings. And who would not be content to ſuffer upon terms of ſuch advantage? *to paſs through many tribulations into the Kingdom of God*, and to endure a ſhort affliction for an endleſs happineſs? The aſſurance of a future bleſſedneſs is a cordial that will revive our ſpirits more in the day of adverſity, than all the wiſe ſayings and conſiderations of Philoſophy.

Theſe are the arguments which Chriſtianity propounds to us, and they are firm and ſound at the bottom; they have ſtrength and ſubſtance in them, and are apt to work upon humane nature, and the moſt ordinary underſtanding is capable of the force of them. In the ſtrength and virtue of this great example, and in contemplation of this glorious reward, with what reſolution and chearfulneſs, with what courage and patience did vaſt numbers of all ſorts of people in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, not only men but women, not only thoſe of greater ſpirit and more generous education but thoſe of the pooreſt and loweſt condition, not only the learned and the wiſe but the ignorant and illiterate, encounter all the rage and malice of the world and embrace torments and death? Had the precepts and counſels of Philoſophy ever any ſuch effect upon the minds of men? I will conclude this with a paſſage in the life of *Lipſius*, who was a great ſtudier and admirer of the *Stoical* Philoſophy. When he lay upon his death-bed, and one of his friends who came to viſit him told him that he needed not uſe arguments to perſuade him to patience under his pains, the Philoſophy which he had ſtudied ſo much would furniſh him with motives enough to that purpoſe, he anſwers him with this ejaculation, *Domine Jeſu, da mihi patientiam Chriſtianam, Lord Jeſus, give me Chriſtian patience.* No patience like to that which the conſiderations of Chriſtianity are apt to work in us.

And now I have as briefly and plainly as I could endeavour'd to repreſent to you the excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, both in reſpect of the clear diſcoveries which it makes to us of the nature of God which is the great foundation of all Religion, and likewiſe in reſpect of the perfection of its Laws and the power of its arguments to perſuade men both to obey and ſuffer the will of God. By which you may ſee, what the proper tendency and deſign of this Religion is, and what the Laws and precepts of it would make men if they would truly obſerve them and live according to them, ſubſtantially Religious towards God, chaſte and temperate, patient and contented in reference to themſelves and the diſpenſations of God's providence towards them, juſt and honeſt, kind and peaceable and goodnatur'd towards all men. In a word, the Goſpel deſcribes God to us in all reſpects ſuch a one as we would wiſh him to be, gives us ſuch Laws as every man that underſtands himſelf would chuſe to live by, propounds ſuch arguments to perſuade to the obedience of theſe Laws as no man that wiſely loves himſelf and hath any tenderneſs for his own intereſt and happineſs either in this world or the other, can refuſe to be mov'd withal.

And now methinks I may with ſome confidence challenge any Religion in the world to ſhew ſuch a compleat body and collection of holy and reaſonable Laws eſtabliſh'd upon ſuch promiſes and threatnings as the Goſpel contains. And if any man can produce a Religion that can reaſonably pretend to an equal or a greater confirmation than the Goſpel hath, a Religion the precepts and promiſes and threatnings whereof are calculated to make men wiſer and better, more temperate and more chaſte, more meek and more patient, more kind and more juſt, than the laws and motives of Chriſtianity are apt to make men; if any man can produce ſuch a Religion, I am ready to be of it. Let but any man ſhew me any Book in the world, the doctrines whereof have the ſeal of ſuch miracles as the doctrine of the Scriptures hath; a Book which contains the heads of our duty ſo perfectly, and without the mixture of any thing that is unreaſonable, or vicious, or any ways unworthy of God; that commands us every thing in reaſon neceſſary to be done, and abridgeth us of no lawful pleaſure without offering us abundant recompence for our preſent ſelf-denial; a Book the rules whereof, if they were practic'd, would make men more pious and devout, more holy and ſober, more juſt and fair in their dealings, better friends and better neighbours, better magiſtrates and better ſubjects and better in all relations, and which does offer to the underſtanding of men more powerful arguments to perſuade them to be all this; let any man, I ſay, ſhew me ſuch a Book, and I will lay aſide the Scripture and preach out of *that*.

And do we not all profeſs to be of this excellent Religion, and to ſtudy and believe this holy Book of the Scriptures? But alas! who will believe that we do ſo, that ſhall look upon the actions and conſider the lives of the greateſt part of Chriſtians? How groſly and openly do many of us contradict the plain precepts of the Goſpel, by our ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, by living intemperately or unjuſtly, or prophanely in this preſent world? As if *the grace of God which brings ſalvation*, had never *appear'd* to us, as if we had never heard of Heaven or Hell, or believ'd not one word that the Scripture ſays concerning them, as if we were in no expectation *of the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, whom God hath *appointed to judge the world in righteouſneſs*, and who will beſtow mighty rewards upon thoſe who faithfully ſerve him, but will come *in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*.

Let us not then deceive our ſelves by pretending to this *excellent knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*, if we do not frame our lives according to it. For tho we *know theſe things* never ſo well, yet we are not *happy* unleſs *we do them*: Nay, we are but the more miſerable for knowing them if we do them not; Therefore it concerns every one of us to conſider ſeriouſly what we believe; and whether our belief of the Chriſtian Religion have its due effect upon our lives. If not, all the Precepts and Promiſes and Threatnings of the Goſpel will riſe up in judgment againſt us, and the Articles of our Faith will be ſo many Articles of Accuſation, and the great weight of our charge will be this that we did not obey that Goſpel which we profeſs'd to believe, that we made confeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith but liv'd like Heathens. Not to believe the Chriſtian Religion, after ſo great evidence and confirmation as God hath given to it, is very unreaſonable; but to believe it to be true, and yet to live as if it were falſe, is the greateſt repugnancy and contradiction that can be. He that does not believe Chriſtianity, either hath, or thinks he hath ſome reaſon for withholding his aſſent from it. But he that believes it, and yet lives contrary to it, knows that he hath no reaſon for what he does, and is convinc'd that he ought to do otherwiſe: And he is a miſerable man indeed that does thoſe things, for the doing of which he continually ſtands condemn'd by his own mind, and accordingly God will deal more ſeverely with ſuch perſons. He will pardon a thouſand defects in our underſtandings, if they do not proceed from groſs careleſneſs and neglect of our ſelves; but the faults of our wills have no excuſe, becauſe we knew to do better and were convinc'd in our minds that we ought not to have done ſo.

Doſt thou believe that *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men*, and doſt thou ſtill allow thy ſelf *in ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*? Art thou convinc'd that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord*, and doſt thou ſtill perſiſt in a wicked courſe? Art thou fully perſuaded that *no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous, nor unrighteous perſon ſhall have any inheritance in the Kingdom of God and Chriſt,* and doſt thou for all that continue to practiſe theſe vices? What canſt thou ſay (*man*) why it ſhould not be to thee according to thy faith? If it ſo fall out that thou art miſerable and undone for ever, thou haſt no reaſon to be ſurpriz'd as if ſome unexpected thing had happen'd to thee. It is but with thee juſt as thou believed'ſt it would be when thou didſt theſe things. For how ~~couldſt thou expect that God ſhould accept of thy~~ good belief when thou didſt ſo notoriouſly contradict it by a bad life? How couldſt thou look for other but that God ſhould condemn thee for the doing of thoſe things for which thine own Conſcience did condemn thee all the while thou waſt doing of them; When we come into the other world there is no conſideration that will ſting our conſciences more cruelly than this, that we did wickedly when we knew to have done better, and choſe to make our ſelves miſerable when we underſtood the way to have been happy. To conclude, we Chriſtians have certainly the beſt and the holieſt, the wiſeſt and moſt reaſonable Religion in the world; but then we are in the worſt condition of all mankind, if the beſt Religion in the world do not make us good.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

The Precepts of Chriſtianity not grievous.

1 JOHN V. 3.

—And his commandments are not grievous.

ONE of the great prejudices which men have entertain'd againſt the Chriſtian Religion is this, that it lays upon men *heavy burthens and grievous to be born*, that the Laws of it are very ſtrict and ſevere, difficult to be kept and yet dangerous to be broken; That it requires us to govern and keep under our paſſions, and to contradict many times our ſtrongeſt inclinations and deſires, *to cut off our right hand* and *to pluck out our right eye*, to *love our enemies*, to *bleſs them that curſe us*, to *do good to them that hate us*, and to *pray for them that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us*; to forgive the greateſt injuries that are done to us, and to make reparation for the leaſt that we do to others; to be contented with our condition, patient under ſufferings, and ready to ſacrifice our deareſt intereſts in this world, and even our very lives, in the cauſe of God and Religion: All theſe ſeem to be *hard ſayings* and *grievous commandments*.

For the removal of this prejudice I have choſen theſe words of the Apoſtle, which expreſly tells us the contrary, that *the commandments of God are not grievous*.

And though this be a great truth if it be impartially conſider'd, yet it is alſo a great paradox to men of corrupt minds and vicious practices, who are prejudic'd againſt Religion and the holy Laws of God by their intereſt and their luſts. This ſeems a ſtrange *propoſition* to thoſe who look upon Religion at a diſtance and never try'd the experiment of a holy life, who meaſure the Laws of God not by the intrinſecal goodneſs and equity of them, but by the reluctancy and oppoſition which they find in their own hearts againſt them.

Upon this account it will be requiſite to take ſome pains to ſatisfy the reaſon of men concerning this truth, and if it be poſſible to make it ſo evident that thoſe who are unwilling to own it may yet be aſham'd to deny it. And methinks I have this peculiar advantage in the argument I have now undertaken, that every reaſonable man cannot chuſe but wiſh me ſucceſs in this attempt, becauſe I undertake the proof of that which it is every man's intereſt that it ſhould be true: And if I can make it out, this pretence againſt Religion will not only be baffled but we ſhall gain a new and forcible argument to perſuade men over to it.

Now the eaſineſs or difficulty of the obſervation of any Laws or commands depends chiefly upon theſe *three* things.

Firſt, Upon the Nature of the Laws themſelves and their ſuitableneſs or unſuitableneſs to thoſe to whom they are given.

Secondly, Upon the ability or weakneſs of thoſe on whom theſe Laws are impos'd for the keeping of them. For eaſineſs and difficulty are relative terms and refer to ſome power, and a thing may be difficult to a weak man which yet may be eaſy to the ſame perſon when aſſiſted with a greater ſtrength.

Thirdly, Upon the encouragement that is given to the obſervation of them. For the propoſal of great rewards does very much qualify and allay the difficulty of any undertaking.

Now if I can make theſe three things evident; 1. That the Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſuitable to our nature and advantageous to our intereſt. 2. That we are not deſtitute of ſufficient power and ability for the performance of them. And 3. That we have the greateſt encouragements to this purpoſe: Then have we all imaginable reaſon to aſſent to the truth of this Propoſition that *the commandments of God are not grievous.*

I. The Laws of God are reaſonable, that is, ſuitable to our nature and advantageous to our intereſt. 'Tis true God hath a ſoveraign right over us as we are his creatures, and by virtue of this right he might without injuſtice have impos'd difficult tasks upon us and have requir'd hard things at our hands. But in making Laws for us he hath not made uſe of this right. He hath commanded us nothing in the Goſpel that is either unſuitable to our reaſon, or prejudicial to our intereſt; nay, nothing that is ſevere and againſt the grain of our nature, but when either the apparent neceſſity of our intereſt does require it, or an extraordinary reward is promis'd to our obedience. *He hath ſhew'd thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* This is the ſum of the natural Law, that we ſhould behave our ſelves reverently and obediently towards the Divine Majeſty, and juſtly and charitably towards men; and that in order to the fitting of us for the better diſcharge of theſe duties, we ſhould govern our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights with temperance and moderation. And if we go over the Laws of Chriſtianity, we ſhall find that, excepting a very few particulars, they enjoin the very ſame things; only they have made our duty more clear and certain. But this I have had occaſion to make out largely in the foregoing *diſcourſe*, and therefore I ſhall ſay the leſs to it now.

As to the ſeveral parts of God's worſhip and ſervice, *prayer* and *thankſgiving*, *hearing* and *reading* the *word of God*, and *receiving* of the *Sacrament*; theſe are all no leſs for our own comfort and advantage than for the honour of God and Religion. And there is nothing of difficulty or trouble in the external performance of them, but what hypocriſy can make tolerable to it ſelf: And certainly they muſt be not only much more eaſy, but even delightful, when they are directed by our underſtandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections.

As for thoſe Laws of Religion which concern our duty to our ſelves, as *temperance* and *chaſtity*; or to others, as the ſeveral branches of *juſtice* and *charity*, comprehended in thoſe general rules, *of loving our neighbour as our ſelves*, and *of doing to others as we would have them to do to us*; There is nothing in all theſe Laws but what is moſt reaſonable and fit to be done by us, nothing but what if we were to conſult our own intereſt and happineſs, and did rightly underſtand our ſelves, we would chuſe for our ſelves; nothing but what is eaſy to be underſtood, and as eaſy to be practis'd by an honeſt and a willing mind.

Now the practice of all theſe is ſuitable to our nature, and agreeable to the frame of our underſtandings; proper to our condition and circumſtances in this world, and preparatory to our happineſs in the next. And no man's reaſon did ever dictate to him the contrary of any of theſe; that it is fit for a Creature not to love God, to be undutiful to his great Sovereign, and ungrateful to his beſt benefactor; that it is reaſonable for a man to debauch himſelf by intemperance and brutiſh ſenſuality; to hate, defraud and oppreſs other men. Our very natural reaſon, if we will but liſten to the dictates of it, is an enemy to all theſe ſins, and a law againſt all theſe vices.

And as the practice of all piety and virtue is agreeable to our reaſon, ſo is it likewiſe for the intereſt of mankind; both of private perſons, and of publick Societies, as I have already ſhown. Some virtues plainly tend to the preſervation of our health, others to the improvement and ſecurity of our eſtates, all to the peace and quiet of our minds; and which is ſomewhat more ſtrange, to the advancement of our eſteem and reputation; for though the world be generally bad, and men are apt to approve nothing ſo much as what they do themſelves; yet, I know not how it comes to paſs, men are commonly ſo juſt to virtue and goodneſs, as to praiſe it in others even when they do not practiſe it themſelves.

And as for thoſe precepts of Chriſtianity which ſeem to be moſt harſh and difficult at firſt appearance, (as *repentance* and *reſtitution*, *mortification* of our *luſts* and *paſſions*, *humility*, *patience* and *contentedneſs* with our condition, and *reſignation* of our ſelves to the will of God; *forgiving and loving our enemies*, and *ſelf-denial* for the cauſe of God and Religion) if we look well into them and conſider throughly the nature and tendency of them, even theſe will appear to be both reaſonable in themſelves, and upon one account or other really for our advantage.

What more reaſonable than *repentance*, than that a man when he hath done amiſs and contrary to his duty ſhould be heartily ſorry for it, and reſolve to do ſo no more? And how grievous ſoever it be, it is neceſſary, being the only way to pardon and peace. And in caſe our offence againſt God hath been complicated with injury to men, it is but reaſonable we ſhould make *reſtitution* as far as we are able, according to the nature of the injury. For without this our repentance is not real, becauſe we have not done what we can to undo our fault as much as we can, or at leaſt to hinder the injurious conſequences of it from proceeding any farther: Nor can any man be judg'd to be truly ſorry for his ſin that retains the profit and advantages of it to himſelf. Beſides, that till reparation be made to the utmoſt of our power we can have no peace in our own conſciences, nor any well-grounded hopes of forgiveneſs from God.

Mortification of our luſts and paſſions, though, like *repentance*, it have ſomething in it that is troubleſome, yet nothing that is unreaſonable, or really to our prejudice. If we give way to our Paſſions, we do but gratify our ſelves for the preſent in order to our future diſquiet; but if we reſiſt and conquer them, we lay the foundation of perpetual peace and tranquility in our minds. If we govern our ſelves in the uſe of ſenſual delights by the Laws of God and reaſon, we ſhall find our ſelves more at eaſe than if we ſhould let looſe the reins to our appetites and luſts. For the more we gratify our luſts the more craving they will be, and the more impatient of denial. *Creſcit indulgens ſibi dirus hydrops*, every luſt is a kind of hydropick diſtemper, and the more we drink the more we ſhall thirſt. So that by retrenching our inordinate deſires we do not rob our ſelves of any true pleaſure, but only prevent the pain and trouble of farther diſſatisfaction. *Humility*,

Humility, though it may ſeem to expoſe a man to ſome contempt, yet it is truly the readieſt way to honour: as on the contrary, *pride* is a moſt improper and abſurd means for the accompliſhing of the end it aims at. All other vices do in ſome meaſure attain their end; covetouſneſs does uſually raiſe an eſtate, and ambitious endeavours do often advance men to high places; but pride and inſolence and contempt of others do infallibly defeat their own deſign. They aim at reſpect and eſteem but never attain it, for all mankind do naturally hate and ſlight a proud man.

What more reaſonable than *patience* and *contentedneſs*, and that we ſhould in all things *reſign* up our ſelves to the will of God, who loves us as well as we do our ſelves, and knows what is good for us better than we do our ſelves? this certainly is the beſt way to prevent anxiety and perplexity of mind, and to make the worſt condition as tolerable as it can be, and much more eaſy than it would be otherwiſe.

As for that peculiar *Law* of Chriſtianity which forbids *revenge*, and commands us to *forgive injuries* and to *love our enemies*, no man can think it grievous who conſiders the pleaſure and ſweetneſs of love and the glorious victory of overcoming evil with good, and then compares theſe with the reſtleſs torment and perpetual tumults of a malicious and revengeful ſpirit.

And laſtly, *Self-denial for the cauſe of God and Religion*; this is neither unreaſonable nor to our diſadvantage. If we conſider our infinite obligations to God, we have no reaſon to think much to ſacrifice to him our deareſt intereſts in this world; eſpecially if we conſider withal, how diſproportionably great the reward of our ſufferings ſhall be in another world. Beſides that the intereſt of Religion is of ſo great concernment to the happineſs of mankind, that every man is bound for that reaſon to aſſert the truth of it with the hazard of any thing that is moſt valuable to him in this world.

II. We are not deſtitute of ſufficient power and ſtrength for the performing of God's commands. Had God given us Laws but no power to keep them, his commandments would then indeed have been grievous. 'Tis true we have contracted a great deal of weakneſs and impotency by our wilful degeneracy from goodneſs, but that grace which the Goſpel offers to us for our aſſiſtance is ſufficient for us. And this ſeems to be the particular reaſon why the Apoſtle ſays here in the *Text* that *his commandments are not grievous*, becauſe he offers us an aſſiſtance proportionable to the difficulty of his commands, and the neceſſity of our condition: for it follows immediately after the *Text*, *for whoſoever is born of God, overcometh the world.* Therefore the *commandments* of God *are not grievous*, becauſe every Child of God, *that is*, every Chriſtian is endued with a power whereby he is enabled to reſiſt and conquer the temptations of the world. The ſame Apoſtle elſewhere encourages Chriſtians upon the ſame conſideration, *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Though we be encompaſs'd with many and potent enemies who make it their buſineſs to tempt and to deter us from our duty, yet our caſe is not hard ſo long as we have a greater ſtrength on our ſide: And this the Apoſtle tells us is the caſe of every Chriſtian, *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* Are there legions of Devils who are continually deſigning and working our ruin? there are alſo myriads of good Angels who are more chearful and officious to do us good. For I doubt not, but as thoſe who are bent to do wickedly will never want tempters to urge them on and to puſh them forward in an evil courſe; ſo on the other hand, thoſe who apply themſelves ſeriouſly to the 1 Joh. 4. 4.

the buſineſs of Religion, and yield themſelves tractable to good motions, will find the good ſpirit of God more ready and active to encourage them than the Devil can be to pull them back; unleſs we think that God hath given a greater power and a larger commiſſion to the Devil to do men miſchief, than to his holy Spirits and his holy Angels for our aſſiſtance and encouragement. But then we are to underſtand that this aſſiſtance is only offer'd to men, and not forc'd upon them whether they will or no. For if we beg God's grace but neglect to make uſe of it, if we implore his aſſiſtance for the mortifying of our luſts but will not contribute our own endeavours, God will withdraw his grace and take away his holy Spirit from us. Nay, if after we have begun well we do notoriouſly ſlacken our endeavours, we forfeit the Divine aſſiſtance: If when by God's grace we have in a good meaſure conquer'd the firſt difficulties of Religion, and gain'd ſome habitual ſtrength againſt ſin; if after this we grow careleſs and remiſs, and neglect our guard, and lay our ſelves open to temptations, God's Spirit will not always ſtrive with us: Notwithſtanding all the promiſes of the Goſpel, and the mighty aſſiſtances there offer'd to us, if we love any luſt, and will with *Sampſon* lay our head in *Dalilah*'s lap, we ſhall be inſenſibly robb'd of *our ſtrength, and become like other men.*

III. We have the greateſt encouragement to the obſervance of God's commands. Two things make any courſe of life eaſy; preſent pleaſure, and the aſſurance of a future reward. Religion gives part of its reward in hand, the preſent comfort and ſatisfaction of having done our duty; and for the reſt, it offers us the beſt ſecurity that Heaven can give. Now theſe two muſt needs make our duty very eaſy; a conſiderable reward in hand, and not only the hopes but the aſſurance of a far greater recompence hereafter.

1. Preſent peace and ſatisfaction of mind, and unexpreſſible joy and pleaſure flowing from the teſtimony of a good conſcience. This is preſent payment, beſides that it is the earneſt of a future and greater happineſs. And this does naturally ſpring up in the mind of a good man; *great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them.* All Acts of piety and virtue are not only delightful for the preſent, but they leave peace and contentment behind them: a peace that no outward violence can interrupt or take from us. The pleaſures of a holy life have moreover this peculiar advantage of all worldly joys, that we ſhall never be weary of them; we cannot be cloy'd by the frequent repetition of theſe pleaſures, nor by the long enjoyment of them. I know that ſome vices pretend to bring great pleaſure along with them, and that the delights of a ſenſual and voluptuous life make a glorious ſhow and are attended with much pomp and noiſe, like the ſports of children and fools which are loud and clamorous; or, as *Solomon* elegantly compares them, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, which makes a little noiſe and a ſudden blaze that is preſently over. But the ſerious and the manly pleaſures, the ſolid and ſubſtantial joys, are only to be found in the ways of Religion and Virtue. The moſt ſenſual man that ever was in the world never felt his heart touch'd with ſo delicious and laſting a pleaſure as that is which ſprings from a clear conſcience, and a mind fully ſatisfied with his own actions.

2. But the great encouragement of all is the aſſurance of a future reward. The firm perſuaſion whereof is enough to raiſe us above any thing in this world, and to animate us with courage and reſolution againſt the greateſt difficulties. So the *Apoſtle* reaſons; *His commandments are not grievous; for what-*

whatſoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith. The belief of a future happineſs and glory was that which made the primitive Chriſtians ſo victorious over the world, and gave them the courage to reſiſt all the pleaſures and terrors of Senſe. It cannot be deny'd, but that a religious courſe of life is liable to be incumbred with many difficulties which are naturally grievous to fleſh and blood. But a Chriſtian is able to comfort himſelf under all theſe with the thoughts of his end, which is *everlaſting life.* He conſiders the goodneſs of God which he believes would not deny him the free enjoyment of the things of this world, were it not that he hath ſuch joys and pleaſures in ſtore for him as will abundantly recompence his preſent ſelf-denial and ſufferings.

Let us now put both theſe together, the *pleaſures* of Religion and the *rewards* of it, and they cannot but appear to be a mighty encouragement. With what pleaſure does a man that lives a holy and a virtuous life deſpiſe the pleaſures of ſin, and notwithſtanding all the allurements of ſenſe perſiſt reſolutely in his courſe? And how is ſuch a man confirm'd in his purpoſe and animated in his holy reſolution, when he finds that God and his own conſcience do applaud his choice; when all along in the courſe of Religion and a virtuous life, in his conflicts with ſin, and reſiſtance of temptations, he hath for his preſent reward the two great pleaſures of innocence and of victory, and for his future encouragement the joyful hopes of a Crown and a Kingdom? A recompence ſo great, as is ſufficient to make a lame man walk, enough to make any one willing to offer violence to his ſtrongeſt paſſions and inclinations. A man would be content to ſtrive with himſelf and to conflict with great difficulties, in hopes of a mighty reward. What poor man would not cheerfully carry a great burthen of gold and ſilver, that were aſſur'd to have the greateſt ſhare of it for his pains, and thereby to be made a man for ever? Whatever difficulties Religion is attended withal they are all ſweeten'd and made eaſy by the propoſal of a great and eternal reward.

But are there no difficulties then in Religion? Is every thing ſo plain and eaſy? Are all the ways of virtue ſo ſmooth and even as we have here repreſented them? Hath not our *Saviour* told us, that *ſtrait is the gate and narrow* Mat. 7. 14.
is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it? Does not the *Apoſtle* Acts 14.
ſay, *that through much tribulation we muſt enter into the Kingdom of God?* 22.
And, *that all that will live Godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution?* And 2 Tim. 3.
does not the *Scripture* every where ſpeak of *ſtriving* and *wreſtling*, and *running*, and *fighting*; of *labouring*, and *watching*, and *giving all diligence?* 12.
And is there nothing grievous in all this?

This is a very material objection, and therefore I ſhall be the more careful to give a ſatisfactory anſwer to it. And that I may do it the more diſtinctly be pleas'd to conſider theſe *ſix* things. 1. That the ſuffering of perſecution for Religion is an extraordinary caſe, which did chiefly concern the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. 2. That this diſcourſe concerning the eaſineſs of God's commands does all along ſuppoſe and acknowledge the difficulties of the entrance upon a Religious courſe. 3. Nor is there any reaſon it ſhould exclude our after care and diligence. 4. All the difficulties of Religion are very much mitigated and allayed by hope and by love. 5. There is incomparably more difficulty and trouble in the ways of ſin and vice than in the ways of Religion and Virtue. 6. If we do but put virtue and vice, a religious and a wicked courſe of life in equal circumſtances; if we will but ſuppoſe a man as much accuſtom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, then I ſhall not doubt to pronounce that the advantages of eaſe and pleaſure will be found to be on the ſide of Religion.

I. The ſuffering of perſecution for Religion is an extraordinary caſe, and did chiefly concern the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. And therefore the general ſayings of our Saviour and his Apoſtles concerning the perſecuted ſtate of Chriſtians are to be limited, as doubtleſs they were intended, principally to thoſe firſt times, and by no means to be equally extended to all Ages of the Church. At firſt indeed whoever embrac'd the profeſſion of Chriſtianity did thereby expoſe themſelves to all the ſufferings which the power and malice of the world could afflict them withal: But ſince *the Kingdoms of the Earth became the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Chriſt*, and the Governors of the world began to be Patrons of the Church, 'tis ſo far from being univerſally true that every Chriſtian hath ſuffer'd the violence of perſecution, that it hath been a rare caſe and happen'd only in ſome few ages, and to ſome perſons. So that this is accidental to a ſtate of Religion, and therefore ought not to be reckon'd among the ordinary difficulties of it. And when it happens God gives extraordinary ſupports, and promiſes mighty rewards to make it tolerable.

II. This diſcourſe concerning the eaſineſs of God's commands does all along ſuppoſe and acknowledge the difficulties of the firſt entrance upon a religious courſe, except only in thoſe perſons who have had the happineſs to be train'd up to Religion by the eaſy and inſenſible degrees of a pious and virtuous education. Theſe indeed are freed from a great deal of pains and difficulty which others who are reclaim'd from a bad courſe of life muſt expect to undergo. They are in a great meaſure excuſed from the pangs of the new birth, from the pains of a ſudden and violent change, from the terrors of an affrighted mind, and from the deep and piercing ſorrows of a more ſolemn repentance. Whereas thoſe who have lived wickedly before muſt look to meet with a great deal more trouble, becauſe they are put upon changing the whole courſe of their life at once, and muſt contend with inveterate habits, and offer no ſmall violence to themſelves in plucking up thoſe vices which have been rooted in them by long cuſtom and continuance. This indeed is grievous and muſt needs be ſenſibly painful, like the *plucking out of a right eye*, or the *cutting off a right hand*: For in this caſe a man muſt ſtrive againſt the very bent and inclination of his ſtrongeſt appetites, againſt the tyranny of cuſtom and the mighty power of a ſecond nature. But this is no juſt reflection upon religion, becauſe this does not proceed from the nature of God's laws, but from an accidental indiſpoſition in our ſelves, which Religion is apt to remove: And if we will but allow ſome time of trouble and uneaſineſs for the cure, when that is once wrought the commands of God will be more eaſy and delightful to us than ever our ſins and luſts were.

III. Nor does this exclude our after care and diligence. For when the *Apoſtle* ſays that *the commandments of God are not grievous*, he does by no means intend to inſinuate that they are calculated for ſlothful and lazy perſons, that they are ſo eaſy as to require no induſtry and endeavour on our part; he only aims to prevent a tacit objection which lies at the bottom of many mens hearts, as if Religion were a moſt grievous and intolerable burthen, and there were more trouble and leſs pleaſure in it than in any other action of humane life. This he utterly denies, but does not hereby intend to exclude ſuch diligence and induſtry as men uſe about other matters. And if I ſhould tell you, that the buſineſs of Religion does not require a very vigorous proſecution and great earneſtneſs of endeavour, I ſhall ſpeak quite beſides the holy *Scriptures*, which ſo frequently command *ſeeking* and *ſtriving* and *labouring*, beſides many other ſuch *phraſes* that import diligence and earneſtneſs. And indeed it were unfit that ſo excellent and glorious a reward as the *Goſpel* promiſes ſhould ſtoop down like fruit upon a full-laden bough to be pluck'd by every idle and wanton hand; that Heaven ſhould be proſtituted to the lazy deſires and faint wiſhes, to the cheap and ordinary endeavours of ſlothful men. God will not ſo much diſparage eternal life and happineſs, as to beſtow it upon thoſe who have conceived ſo low an opinion of it as not to think it worth the labouring for. And ſurely this is ſufficient to recommend Religion to any conſiderate man, if the advantages of it be much greater than of any worldly deſign that we can propound to our ſelves, and the difficulties of it not greater. If the ſame ſeriouſneſs and induſtry of endeavour, which men commonly uſe to raiſe a fortune and advance themſelves in the world, will ſerve to make a man a good man and to bring him to Heaven, what reaſon hath any man to complain of the hard terms of Religion? And I think I may truly ſay that uſually leſs than this does it. For God conſiders our condition in this world and the preſſing neceſſities of this life, that we are fleſh as well as ſpirit and that we have great need of theſe things, and therefore he allows us to be very ſedulous and induſtrious about them. However this I am ſure of, that if men would be as ſerious to ſave their immortal ſouls as they are to ſupport theſe dying bodies; if they would but provide for eternity with the ſame ſolicitude and real care as they do for this life; if they would but ſeek Heaven with the ſame ardor of affection, and vigor of proſecution as they ſeek earthly things; if they would but love God as much as many men do the World, and mind godlineſs as much as men uſually do gain; if they would but go to Church with as good a will as men ordinarily do to their Markets and Fairs, and be in as good earneſt at their devotions as men commonly are in driving a bargain; if they would but endure ſome troubles and inconveniences in the ways of Religion with the ſame patience and conſtancy as they can do ſtorms, and foul ways and miſchances, when they are travelling about their worldly occaſions; If they would but avoid bad company as men uſe to do cheaters, and reject the temptations of the devil and the world as they would do the kind words and inſinuations of a man whom they verily believe to have a deſign to over-reach them; I am confident that ſuch a one could not fail of Heaven, and would be much ſurer of it upon theſe terms, than any man that doth all the other things could be of getting an eſtate, or of attaining any thing in this world.

And cannot every man do thus much? All that I have ſaid ſignifies no more but that men ſhould uſe their ſincere endeavours, and this ſurely every man can do. For to uſe our ſincere endeavours is nothing elſe but to do as much as we can, and it is nonſenſe for any man to deny that he can do as much as he can. And if we would do thus much we are ſure of God's grace and aſſiſtance, which is never wanting to the ſincere endeavours of men. But men expect that Religion ſhould coſt them no pains, that happineſs ſhould drop into their laps without any deſign and endeavour on their part, and that after they have done what they pleaſe while they live God ſhould ſnatch them up to Heaven when they dye. But though *the commandments of God be not grievous*, yet it is fit to let men know that they are not thus eaſy.

IV. All the difficulties of Religion are very much allay'd and ſweeten'd by *hope* and by *love*. By the *hopes* of a mighty reward; ſo great as is enough to raiſe us above our ſelves, and to make us break through all difficulties and diſcouragements. And by the *love* of God, who hath taken all imaginable ways to endear himſelf to us. He gave us our beings, and when we were fallen from that happineſs to which at firſt we were deſign'd, he was pleas'd to reſtore us to a new capacity of it by ſending his only Son into the world to dye for us. So that if we have any ſenſe of kindneſs we cannot but love him who hath done ſo much to oblige us, and if we love him entirely nothing that he commands will be grievous to us; nay, ſo far from that, that the greateſt pleaſure we are capable of will be to pleaſe him. For nothing is difficult to love. It will make a man deny himſelf and croſs his own inclinations to pleaſure them whom he loves. It is a paſſion of a ſtrange power where it reigns, and will cauſe a man to ſubmit to thoſe things with delight which in other circumſtances would ſeem grievous to him. *Jacob* ſerv'd for *Rachel ſeven years,* and after that *ſeven years more; and they ſeemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.* Did but the love of God rule in our hearts, and had we as real an affection for him as ſome men have for their friends, there are no ſuch difficulties in Religion but what love would conquer, and the ſevereſt parts of it would become eaſy when they were once undertaken by a willing mind.

V. There is incomparably more trouble in the ways of ſin and vice than in thoſe of Religion and Virtue. Every notorious ſin is naturally attended with ſome inconvenience of harm, or danger, or diſgrace; which the ſinner ſeldom conſiders till the ſin be committed, and then he is in a labyrinth, and in ſeeking the way out of a preſent inconvenience he entangles himſelf in more. He is glad to make uſe of indirect arts, and laborious crafts, to avoid the conſequence of his faults; and many times is fain to cover one ſin with another, and the more he ſtrives to diſentangle himſelf the more is he *ſnar'd in the work of his own hands.* Into what perplexities did *David*'s ſin bring him? ſuch as by all his power and arts he could not free himſelf from: He was glad to commit a greater crime to avoid the ſhame of a leſs, and could find no other way to conceal his adultery but by plunging himſelf into the guilt of murther. And thus it is proportionably in all other vices. The ways of ſin are *crooked paths,* full of windings and turnings; but *the way of holineſs* and virtue is a *high-way,* and lies ſo plain before us that *way-faring men, though fools, ſhall not err therein.* Iſa. 35. 8. There needs no skill to keep a man's ſelf true and honeſt, if we will but reſolve to deal juſtly and to *ſpeak the truth to our neighbour,* nothing in the whole world is eaſier: For there is nothing of artifice and reach required to enable a man to ſpeak as he thinks, and to do to others as he would be dealt withal himſelf.

And as the ways of ſin are full of intricacy and perplexities, ſo likewiſe of trouble and diſquiet. There is no man that wilfully commits any ſin but his conſcience ſmites him for it, and his guilty mind is frequently gall'd with the remembrance of it, but the reflection upon honeſt and virtuous actions hath nothing of regret and diſquiet in it. No man's conſcience ever troubled him for not being diſhoneſt, no man's reaſon ever challeng'd him for not being drunk, no man ever broke his ſleep or was haunted with fears of divine vengeance becauſe he was conſcious to himſelf that he had *liv'd ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in the world.* But with the ungodly it is not ſo. There is no man that is knowingly wicked but he is guilty to himſelf, and there is no man that carries guilt about him but he hath received a ſting into his Soul which makes him reſtleſs, ſo that he can never have any perfect eaſe and pleaſure in his mind.

I might have deſcended to particular Inſtances, and have ſhewn how much more troubleſome the practice of every ſin and vice is than the exerciſe of the contrary grace and virtue; but that would be too large a Subject to be brought within the limits of a ſingle diſcourſe.

VI. Let but virtue and vice, a religious and wicked courſe of life be put in equal circumſtances, do but ſuppoſe a man to be as much accuſtom'd and inur'd to the one as he has been to the other, and then I doubt not but the advantages of eaſe and pleaſure will be found to be on the ſide of Religion: and if we do not put the caſe thus we make an unequal compariſon. For there is no man but when he firſt begins a wicked courſe feels a great deal of regret in his mind, the terrors of his conſcience and the fears of damnation are very troubleſome to him. It is poſſible that by degrees a man may harden his conſcience, and by a long cuſtom of ſinning may in a great meaſure wear off that tender ſenſe of good and evil which makes ſin ſo uneaſy: But then if in the practice of a holy life a man may by the ſame degrees arrive to far greater peace and tranquility of mind than ever any wicked man found in a ſinful courſe, if by cuſtom virtue will come to be more pleaſant than ever vice was, then the advantage is plainly on the ſide of Religion. And this is truly the caſe. It is troubleſome at firſt for a man to begin any new courſe, and to do contrary to what he hath been accuſtom'd to; but let a man but habituate himſelf to a religious and virtuous life, and the trouble will go off by degrees and unſpeakable pleaſure ſucceed in the room of it. It is an excellent rule which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars, *optimum vitæ genus eligito, nam conſuetudo faciet jucundiſſimum*; *pitch upon the beſt courſe of life*, reſolve always to do that which is moſt reaſonable and virtuous, *and cuſtom will ſoon render it the moſt eaſy.* There is nothing of difficulty in a good life but what may be conquer'd by cuſtom as well as the difficulties of any other courſe, and when a man is once us'd to it the pleaſure of it will be greater than of any other courſe.

Let no man then decline or forſake Religion for the pretended difficulties of it, and lay aſide all cares of God's commandments upon this ſuggeſtion that they are impoſſible to be kept. For you ſee they are not only poſſible but eaſy. And thoſe who upon pretence of the trouble and difficulties of Religion abandon themſelves to a wicked courſe of life may eaſily be convinc'd that they take more pains to make themſelves miſerable than would ſerve to bring them to hapineſs. There is no man that is a ſervant of ſin, and a ſlave to any baſe luſt, but might if he pleas'd get to Heaven with leſs trouble than he goes to Hell.

So that upon conſideration of the whole matter, there is no reaſon why any man ſhould be deterr'd from a holy and virtuous life for fear of the labour and pains of it. Becauſe every one that is wicked takes more pains in another way, and is more induſtrious only to a worſe purpoſe. Now he that can travel in deep and foul ways ought not to ſay that he cannot walk in fair. He that ventures to run upon a precipice when every ſtep he takes is with danger of his life and his ſoul, ought not to pretend any thing againſt the plain and ſafe paths of Religion, which will entertain us with pleaſure all along in the way, and crown us with happineſs at the end.

SERMON VII.

Of the Obligation of Chriſtians to a Holy Life.

2 TIM. II. 19.

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.

THE whole verſe runs thus: *Nevertheleſs the foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this ſeal, The Lord knoweth them that are his: And, Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity.*

In which words the Apoſtle declares to us the terms of the covenant between God and man. For the word θεμέλιος which is here tranſlated *foundation*, according to the uſual ſignification of it, is likewiſe (as learned men have obſerv'd) ſometimes uſed for an inſtrument of contract whereby two parties do oblige themſelves mutually to each other. And this notion of the word agrees very well with what follows concerning the *ſeal* affix'd to it, which is very ſuitable to a *Covenant* but not at all to a *foundation.* 'Tis true indeed, as the learned *Grotius* hath obſerved, there uſed anciently to be inſcriptions on foundation-ſtones, and the word σφραγὶς which we render *ſeal* may likewiſe ſignify an *inſcription*; and then the ſenſe will be very current thus, *The foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this* inſcription. But it is to be conſidered, that though σφραγὶς may ſignify an *inſcription*, yet it is only an *inſcription* upon a *ſeal*, which hath no relation to a foundation, but is very proper to a covenant or mutual obligation. And accordingly the *ſeal* affix'd to this *inſtrument*, or *covenant* between God and man is in alluſion to the cuſtom of thoſe countries ſaid to have an inſcription on both ſides agreeable to the condition of the perſons contracting. On God's part there is this *impreſs* or inſcription, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*, that is, God will own and reward thoſe that are faithful to him: And on our part, *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, depart from iniquity.*

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt, that is, that calls himſelf a Chriſtian. For to name the name of any one or to have his name call'd upon by us does according to the uſe of this Phraſe among the *Hebrews*, ſignify nothing elſe but to be denominated from him. Thus 'tis frequently uſed in the *Old* Teſtament, and ſometimes in the *New*, James 2. 7. *Do they not blaſpheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?* that is, the name or title of Chriſtians; and that expreſſion, 1 Pet. 4. 14. *if ye be reproached for the name of Chriſt*, is at the ſixteenth verſe varied, *if any man ſuffer as a Chriſtian.* So that to name the name of Chriſt is to call our ſelves Chriſtians.

Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity. The word ἀδικία is often taken ſtrictly for injuſtice or unrighteouſneſs, but ſometimes uſed more largely for ſin and wickedneſs in the general. And ſo it ſeems to be uſed here in the Text, becauſe there is no reaſon from the context

text to reſtrain it to any particular kind of ſin or vice, and becauſe Chriſtianity lays an equal obligation upon men to abſtain from all ſin. *Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity*, that is, every Chriſtian obligeth himſelf by his profeſſion to renounce all ſin and to live a holy life.

In ſpeaking to this argument I ſhall do theſe two things.

1. Shew what obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives.
2. Endeavour to perſuade thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians to anſwer this obligation.

I. What obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon men to live holy lives. He that calls himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to entertain the Doctrine of Chriſt, to live in the imitation of his holy example, and to have ſolemnly engaged himſelf to all this. I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe, and then come to that which I principally intend, to perſuade men to live accordingly.

1. He that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, to believe the whole Goſpel, to aſſent to all the articles of the Chriſtian faith, to all the precepts and promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel. Now the great deſign, the proper intention of this doctrine is to take men off from ſin, and to direct and encourage them to a holy life. It teacheth us what we are to believe concerning God and Chriſt, not with any deſign to entertain our minds with the bare ſpeculation of thoſe truths but to better our lives. For every article of our faith is a proper argument againſt ſin, and a powerful motive to obedience. The whole hiſtory of Chriſt's appearance in the world, all the diſcourſes and actions of his life, and the ſufferings of his death do all tend to this; the ultimate iſſue of all is the *deſtroying of ſin*; ſo St. *John* tells us, *for this purpoſe was the Son of* 1 Joh. 3.8. *God manifeſted that he might deſtroy the works of the devil*. But this is moſt expreſly and fully declar'd to us, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12, 13, 14. *The grace of God that bringeth ſalvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; who gave himſelf for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

The *precepts* of the Goſpel do ſtrictly command holineſs, and that univerſal; the purity of our ſouls, and the chaſtity of our bodies; *to cleanſe our* 2 Cor. 7. 1. *ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit; to abſtain from all kind of evil; to* 1 Theſ. 5. 22. *be holy in all manner of converſation.* They require us to endeavour after the higheſt degrees of holineſs that are attainable by us in this imperfect 1 Pet. 1. 15. ſtate, *to be holy as he that hath called us is holy; to be perfect as our father* Mat. 5. 48. *which is in heaven is perfect.*

And all the *promiſes* of the Goſpel are ſo many encouragements to obedience and a holy life; *having therefore theſe promiſes, let us cleanſe our* 2 Cor. 7. 1. *ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and perfect holineſs in the fear of God.* We are told by St. *Peter* that theſe exceeding great and precious promiſes are given to us that by theſe *we might be partakers of a Divine nature,* 2 Pet. 1. 4. *having eſcaped the pollution that is in the world through luſt*; and that we might *give all diligence to add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance and patience and brotherly kindneſs and charity.*

And the *threatnings* of the Goſpel are ſo many powerful arguments againſt ſin.

Rom. 1. 16, 18. Therefore the Apoſtle calls the *Goſpel the power of God unto ſalvation,* becauſe therein the *wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men.* So that if we call our ſelves Chriſtians we profeſs to embrace the holy doctrine of the Chriſtian Religion which is perfectly oppoſite to all impiety and wickedneſs of life. We profeſs to be governed by thoſe laws which do ſtrictly enjoin holineſs and virtue. We profeſs to be perſuaded that all the promiſes and threatnings of the Goſpel are true, which offer ſuch great and glorious rewards to obedience, and threaten tranſgreſſion and diſobedience with ſuch dreadful puniſhments. And if ſo, we are obliged both by our reaſon and our intereſt to live accordingly.

2. He that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian profeſſeth to live in the imitation of Chriſt's example and to follow his ſteps *who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* The Son of God came into the world not only by his Doctrine to inſtruct us in the way to happineſs and by his death to make expiation of ſin, but by his life to be an example to us of holineſs and virtue. Therefore in Scripture we find ſeveral *Titles* given him which import his exemplarineſs, as of a *Prince* and a *Captain*, a *Maſter* and a *Guide.* Now if he be our pattern we ſhould endeavour to be like him, *to have the ſame mind that was in Chriſt Jeſus*; *to walk in love as he alſo hath loved us and given himſelf for us.* We ſhould aſpire after the higheſt degree of holineſs, make it our conſtant and ſincere endeavour to pleaſe God and do his will and *to fulfil all righteouſneſs* as he did. Does any man profeſs himſelf a Chriſtian and yet abandons himſelf to intemperance and filthy luſts? is this like our Saviour? Are we cruel and unmerciful? is this like the High Prieſt of our profeſſion? Are we proud and paſſionate, malicious and revengeful? is this to be like-minded with Chriſt who was meek and lowly in Spirit, who prayed for his enemies and offer'd up his blood to God on the behalf of them that ſhed it? If we call our ſelves Chriſtians we profeſs to have the life of Chriſt continually before us, and to be always correcting and reforming our lives by that pattern.

3. He that calls himſelf a Chriſtian hath ſolemnly engaged himſelf to renounce all ſin and to live a holy life. By Baptiſm we have ſolemnly taken upon us the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and engaged our ſelves to renounce the Devil and all his works, and obediently to keep God's commandments. Anciently thoſe who were baptized put off their garments, which ſignified the putting off the body of ſin; and were immers'd and buried in the water, to repreſent their death of ſin; and then did riſe up again out of the water, to ſignify their entrance upon a new life. And to theſe cuſtoms the Rom. 6. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. Apoſtle alludes when he ſays, *How ſhall we that are dead to ſin live any longer therein; Know ye not, that ſo many of us as were baptized into Jeſus Chriſt were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptiſm into death, that like as Chriſt was raiſed up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even ſo we alſo ſhould walk in newneſs of life: For if we have been planted together in the likeneſs of his death, we ſhall be alſo in the likeneſs of his reſurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve ſin.* So that by Baptiſm we profeſs to be entred into a new ſtate, and to be endued with a new nature; *to have put off the old man with his deeds*; to have quitted *our former converſation, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts,* and to be *renewed in the ſpirit of our minds,* and to have *put on the new man which after God is created*

in righteouſneſs and true holineſs. And therefore Baptiſm is called the *putting on of Chriſt*; *As many of you as have been baptized into Chriſt, have put on Chriſt.* Now if we profeſs to have put on Chriſt we muſt quit and renounce our luſts, becauſe theſe are inconſiſtent, as appears by the oppoſition which the Apoſtle makes between them; *Put ye on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and make not proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof.*

Gal. 3. 27.

Rom. 13. 14.

And as we did ſolemnly covenant with God to this purpoſe in Baptiſm, ſo we do ſolemnly renew this obligation ſo often as we receive the bleſſed Sacrament of Chriſt's Body and Blood. Therefore the cup in the Sacrament is called the *new Covenant in his Blood*, that is, this repreſents the ſhedding of Chriſt's blood by which rite the covenant between God and man is ratified. And as by this God doth confirm his promiſes to us, ſo we do oblige our ſelves to be faithful and obedient to him, *and if we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*, that is, after we are become Chriſtians, *we account the blood of the Covenant a common thing*, that is, we make nothing of the ſolemneſt *rite* that ever was uſed in the world for confirmation of any covenant, the ſhedding of the blood of the Son of God. And that this was always underſtood to be the meaning of this holy Sacrament, to renew our Covenant with God, and ſolemnly to confirm our reſolutions of a holy life is very plain from that account which *Pliny* * gives us of the worſhip of the Chriſtians in a Letter to *Trajan* the Emperor; in which he tells him *that they aſſembled early in the morning before day, to ſing a Hymn to Chriſt as God*; and then (ſaith he) they do *ſacramento ſe obſtringere, bind themſelves by a ſacrament or oath not to rob or ſteal or commit adultery, not to break their word or falſify their truſt, and after they have eaten together they depart home.* Which is plainly an account of the Chriſtians celebrating of the holy Sacrament, which it ſeems was then look'd upon as an *oath* whereby Chriſtians did ſolemnly covenant and engage themſelves againſt all wickedneſs and vice.

* *Plin.* Epiſt. L. 10. Epiſt. 97.

Thus you ſee what obligation the profeſſion of Chriſtianity lays upon us to holineſs of life. From all which it is evident that the Goſpel requires ſomething on our part. For the Covenant between God and us is a mutual engagement, and as there are *bleſſings* promiſed on his part ſo there are *conditions* to be performed on ours. And if we live wicked and unholy lives, if we neglect our duty towards God we have no title at all to the bleſſings of this Covenant. The contrary doctrine to this hath been greedily entertained to the vaſt prejudice of Chriſtianity, as if in this new Covenant of the Goſpel God took all upon himſelf, and required nothing, or as good as nothing, of us, that it would be a diſparagement to the freedom of God's grace to think he expects any thing from us. That the Goſpel is all promiſes and our part is only to believe and embrace them, that is to be confident that God will perform them if we can but think ſo, though we do nothing elſe; which is an eaſy condition to fools but the hardeſt in the world to a wiſe man, who if his ſalvation depended upon it could never perſuade himſelf to believe that the holy God without any reſpect at all to his repentance and amendment would beſtow upon him forgiveneſs of ſins and eternal life, only becauſe he was confident that God would do ſo. As if any man could think that it were a thing ſo highly acceptable to God that men ſhould believe of him that he loves to diſpenſe his grace and mercy upon the moſt unfit and unreaſonable terms. A Covenant does neceſſarily imply a mutual obligation, and the Scripture plainly tells us what are the terms and conditions of this Covenant both on God's part and ours, namely, that he *will be our God* and we *ſhall be his people*. But he hath no where ſaid that though we be not *his people* yet he will be *our God.* The *ſeal* of this Covenant hath two *inſcriptions* upon it; one on God's part, that he will *know them that are his*; and another on our part, that we ſhall *depart from iniquity.* But if we will not ſubmit to this condition God will not know us, but will bid us depart from him. So our Saviour tells us, *I will ſay unto them depart from me ye workers of iniquity, I know you not.* Mat. 7.23. If we deal falſly in covenant with God and break looſe from all our engagements to him, we releaſe God from all the promiſes that he hath made to us. If we neglect to perform thoſe conditions upon which he hath ſuſpended the performance of his promiſes, we diſcharge the obligation on God's part, and he remains faithful though he deny us that happineſs which he promiſed under thoſe conditions which we have neglected.

II. I come now to the *ſecond* thing propounded, and that is to perſuade thoſe who profeſs Chriſtianity to anſwer thoſe obligations to a holy life which their Religion lays upon them. We all call our ſelves Chriſtians, and would be very much offended at any man that ſhould deny us this title. But let us not cheat our ſelves with an empty and inſignificant name, but if we will call our ſelves Chriſtians let us fill up this great title, and make good our profeſſion by a ſuitable life and practice. And to perſuade us hereto, I will urge theſe three conſiderations.

1. The indecency of the contrary.
2. The great ſcandal of it to our bleſſed Saviour and his holy Religion: And
3. The infinite danger of it to our own ſouls.

1. Conſider how unbecoming it is for a man to live unſuitably to his profeſſion. If we call our ſelves Chriſtians we profeſs to entertain the doctrine of the Goſpel, to be taught and inſtructed by the beſt maſter, to be the diſciples of the higheſt and moſt perfect inſtitution that ever was in the world, to have embraced a Religion which contains the moſt exact rules for the conduct and government of our lives, which lays down the plaineſt precepts, ſets before us the beſt patterns and examples of a holy life, and offers us the greateſt aſſiſtances and encouragements to this purpoſe. We profeſs to be furniſhed with the beſt arguments to excite us to holineſs and virtue, to be awed with the greateſt fears and animated with the beſt hopes of any men in the world.

Now whoever makes ſuch a profeſſion as this obligeth himſelf to live anſwerably, to do nothing that ſhall groſly contradict it. Nothing is more abſurd than for a man to act contrary to his profeſſion, to pretend to great matters and perform nothing of what he pretends to. Wiſe men will not be caught with pretences nor be impoſed upon with an empty profeſſion, but they will enquire into our lives and actions and by theſe they will make a judgment of us. They cannot ſee into our hearts nor pry into our underſtandings to diſcover what it is that we inwardly believe, they cannot diſcern thoſe ſecret and ſupernatural principles that we pretend to be acted by: But this they can do, they can examine our actions and behold our good or bad works, and try whether our lives be indeed anſwerable to our profeſſion and do really excel the lives of other men who do not pretend to ſuch great things There are a great many ſagacious perſons who will eaſily find us out, will look under our maſk, and ſee through all our fine pretenſions, and will quickly diſcern the abſurdity of telling the world that we believe one thing when we do the contrary.

If we profeſs to believe the Chriſtian Religion, we expoſe our ſelves to the ſcorn and contempt of every diſcerning man if we do not live up to it. With what face can any man continue in the practice of any known ſin that profeſſeth to believe the holy doctrine of the Goſpel which forbids all ſin under the higheſt and ſevereſt penalties? If we did but believe the hiſtory of the Goſpel as we do any ordinary credible ſtory, and did we but regard the Laws of Chriſtianity as we do the laws of the Land; were we but perſuaded, that fraud and oppreſſion, lying and perjury, intemperance and uncleanneſs, covetouſneſs and pride, malice and revenge, the neglect of God and Religion will bring men to hell as certainly as treaſon and felony will bring a man under the ſentence of the Law: Had we but the ſame awe and regard for the threatnings and promiſes of the Goſpel that we have for the frowns and ſmiles of thoſe who are in power and authority, even this would be effectual to keep us from ſin. And if the Goſpel have not this effect upon us it is an argument that we do not believe it.

'Tis to no purpoſe to go about to perſuade men that we do heartily entertain the doctrine of Chriſt, *that doctrine* which hath all the characters of piety and juſtice, of holineſs and virtue upon it; which obligeth men to *whatſoever things are true, whatſoever things are honeſt, whatſoever things are chaſte, whatſoever things are lovely, and of good report*, if we have no regard to theſe things in our lives. He that would know what a man believes, let him attend rather to what he does than to what he talks. He that leads a wicked life makes a more credible and effectual profeſſion of infidelity than he who in words only denies the Goſpel. It is the hardeſt thing in the world to imagine that *that* man believes Chriſtianity who by ungodlineſs and worldly luſts does deny and renounce it. If we profeſs our ſelves Chriſtians, it may juſtly be expected from us that we ſhould evidence this by our actions, that we ſhould live at another rate than the Heathens did; that we who worſhip a holy and juſt God ſhould not allow our ſelves the liberty to ſin as thoſe did who worſhipped ſuch Gods as were examples of ſin and patrons of their vices. Thou who profeſſeſt thy ſelf a Chriſtian may'ſt not walk in the luſts of the fleſh and of uncleanneſs as thoſe did who worſhipped a luſtful *Jupiter* and a wanton *Venus*. Thou may'ſt not be intemperate as thoſe were who worſhipped a drunken *Bacchus*. Thou may'ſt not be cruel and unmerciful as thoſe were who worſhipped a fierce *Saturn*: Nor may'ſt thou ſteal as thoſe did who worſhipped a thieviſh *Mercury*. Thou muſt remember that thou art a Chriſtian, and when thou art ready to debaſe thy ſelf to any vile luſt conſider what title thou beareſt, by what name thou art called, whoſe diſciple thou art; and then ſay to thy ſelf, ſhall I allow my ſelf in any impiety or wickedneſs of life who pretend to be inſtructed by that grace of God which teaches men to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts? Shall I cheriſh any ſinful paſſion who pretend to have mortified all theſe and to have *put off the old man with his deeds?*

It is not being gilded over with the external profeſſion of Chriſtianity that will avail us, our Religion muſt be a vital principle inwardly to change and transform us. What the Apoſtle ſays concerning Circumciſion we may apply to them that are baptized and make an outward profeſſion of Chriſtianity; Baptiſm verily profiteth if we obey the Goſpel, but if we walk contrary to the precepts of it our Baptiſm is no Baptiſm, and our Chriſtianity is Heatheniſm. If by our lives and actions we do contradict that Religion which we profeſs, we do by this very thing prove our ſelves to be counterfeits and hypocrites; and that we have only taken up our Religion for a faſhion, and received it according to cuſtom; we were born in a Countrey where it is reverenced, and therefore we are of it. And the reaſon why we are Chriſtians rather than Jews, or Turks, or Heathens, is becauſe Chriſtian Religion had the fortune to come firſt in our way and to beſpeak us at our entrance into the world.

Are we not aſhamed to take up a profeſſion upon ſuch ſlight grounds, and to wear about us ſuch an empty title? It ſhould make our blood to riſe in our faces to conſider what a diſtance there is between our Religion and our lives. I remember *Tully* upbraids the Philoſophers very ſmartly for living unſuitably to their Doctrines. A Philoſopher (ſaith he) is unpardonable if he miſcarry in his life, *quod in officio cujus magiſter eſſe vult labitur*; *artemque vitæ profeſſus, delinquit in vita*; *becauſe he is faulty in that wherein he pretends to be a maſter, and whilſt he profeſſeth an Art of living better than other men he miſcarries in this life.* With how much greater reaſon may we challenge Chriſtians for the miſcarriages of their lives, which are ſo directly contrary to their profeſſion? It may juſtly be ſuſpected that ſo perfect an Inſtitution as the Goſpel is, which the Son of God came from Heaven on purpoſe to propagate in the world, ſhould make men more ſtrictly holy and virtuous, and ſet the profeſſors of it at a greater diſtance from all impurity and vice than ever any inſtitution in the world did. If a man profeſs any other *Art* or *Calling* it is expected that he ſhould be skill'd in it, and excel thoſe who do not pretend to it. 'Tis the greateſt diſparagement to a Phyſician that can be, to ſay of him, that he is in other reſpects an excellent man only he hath no great skill in diſeaſes, and the methods of cure, becauſe this is his *Profeſſion*: He might be pardon'd for other defects, but the proper skill of his *Art* may juſtly be expected from him. So for a Chriſtian; to ſay of him, the worſt thing in him is his *life*; he is very orthodox in his opinions, but he's an ill-natur'd man, one of very violent paſſions, he will be very frequently drunk, he makes no conſcience of his dealings, he is very uncharitable to all that differ from him: This man is faulty in his profeſſion, he is defective in that which ſhould be his excellency; he may have orthodox opinions in Religion, but when all is done there is no ſuch error and hereſy, nothing ſo fundamentally oppoſite to Religion as a wicked life. A Chriſtian does not pretend to have a better wit or a more piercing underſtanding than a Turk or Heathen, but he profeſſeth to live better than they, to be more chaſte and more temperate, more juſt and more charitable, more meek and gentle, more loving and peaceable than other men: If he fail in this, where is the *Art* the man boaſts of? to what purpoſe is all this noiſe and ſtir about the Goſpel and the holy doctrine of Chriſt? If any man profeſs himſelf a Chriſtian and do not live better than others he is a mere pretender and *Mountebank* in Religion, he's a bungler in his own *Art* and unskill'd in his proper profeſſion. This is the firſt, the indecency of the thing.

2. Conſider how great a ſcandal this muſt needs be to our bleſſed Saviour and his holy Religion. The Chriſtian Religion hath undergone many a hard cenſure for the miſcarriages of the profeſſors of it. The impieties and vices of thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians

have cauſed many ſharp reflections upon Chriſtianity, and made the Son of God and the Bleſſed Saviour of the world to wear the odious names of deceiver and impoſtor. If a man did deſign to do the greateſt ſpight to Religion he could not give it a deeper wound, he could not take a more effectual courſe to diſparage it than by a lewd and debauch'd life. For this will ſtill be an objection in the minds of thoſe who are ſtrangers and enemies to our Religion. If the Goſpel were ſo excellent an inſtitution as it is reported to be, ſurely we ſhould ſee better effects of it in the lives of thoſe who profeſs it. When we would perſuade a Heathen to our Religion, and tell him how holy a God we ſerve, what excellent patterns we imitate, what ſpiritual and divine precepts of holineſs and virtue our Religion does contain; may not he reply, would you have me to believe you when I ſee you do not believe your ſelves? If you believed your Religion you would live according to it. For if the Goſpel were every word of it falſe, if there were neither a Heaven to be hoped for nor a Hell to be feared after this life, how could many Chriſtians live worſe than they do?

As we would not proclaim to the world that the Goſpel is an unholy and vicious Inſtitution, let us take heed that we bring no ſcandal upon it by our lives, leſt the enemies of our Religion ſay as *Salvian* tells us they did in his time, *Si Chriſtus Sancta docuiſſet Chriſtiani ſancte vixiſſent*, ſurely *if Chriſt had taught ſo holy a doctrine Chriſtians would have lived holier lives. Tully* tells us that one of the ſhrewdeſt arguments that ever was brought againſt Philoſophy was this, *quoſdam perfectos Philoſophos turpiter vivere, that ſome great Philoſophers led very filthy lives. Celſus* and *Porphyry, Hierocles* and *Julian*, among all their witty invectives againſt Chriſtian Religion have nothing againſt it that reflects ſo much upon it as do the wicked lives of ſo many Chriſtians. The greateſt enmity to Religion is to profeſs it and to live unanſwerably to it.

This conſideration ought greatly to affect us. I am ſure the Apoſtle ſpeaks of it with great paſſion and vehemency, *for many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt, whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things.* Phil. 3.18. A *Jew* or a *Turk* is not ſo great an enemy to Chriſtianity as a lewd and vicious Chriſtian. Therefore let me beſeech Chriſtians, as they tender the honour of their Saviour and the credit of their Religion, that they would conform their lives to the holy precepts of Chriſtanity. And if there be any who are reſolved to continue in a vicious courſe to the injury and diſparagement of Chriſtianity, I could almoſt intreat of them that they would quit their profeſſion and renounce their Baptiſm, that they would lay aſide their title of Chriſtians and initiate themſelves in Heatheniſh rites and ſuperſtitions, or be circumciſed for *Jews* or *Turks*: For it were really better, upon ſome accounts, that ſuch men ſhould abandon their Profeſſion, than keep on a vizard which ſerves to no other purpoſe but to ſcare others from Religion.

3. And Laſtly, Let us conſider the danger we expoſe our ſelves to by not living anſwerably to our Religion. And this, I hope, may prevail upon ſuch as are not moved by the former conſiderations. Hypocrites are inſtanc'd in Scripture, as a ſort of ſinners that ſhall have the ſharpeſt torments and the fierceſt damnation. When our Saviour would ſet forth the great ſeverity of the Lord towards the evil

Mat. 24. 51. ſervant he expreſſeth it thus, *he ſhall cut him aſunder and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites.* So that the puniſhment of Hypocrites ſeems to be made in the meaſure and ſtandard of the higheſt puniſhment. Thou profeſſeſt to believe in Chriſt and to hope in him for ſalvation, but in the mean time thou liveſt a wicked and unholy life, thou doſt not believe but preſume on him, and wilt find at the great day that this thy confidence will be thy confuſion, and he whom thou hopeſt will be thy Advocate and Saviour will prove thy Accuſer and thy Judge. What our Saviour ſays to the *Jews*, *There is one that accuſeth* Joh. 5. 45. *you even Moſes in whom ye truſt*, may very well be applied to falſe Chriſtians, there is one that *accuſeth* you and will condemn you, *even Jeſus in whom ye truſt.*

The profeſſion of Chriſtianity and mens having the name of Chriſt named upon them will be ſo far from ſecuring them from Hell, that it will ſink them the deeper into it. Many are apt to pity the poor Heathens who never heard of the name of Chriſt, and ſadly to condole their caſe, but as our Saviour ſaid upon another occaſion, *Weep not for them, weep for your ſelves.* There's no ſuch miſerable perſon in the world as a degenerate Chriſtian, becauſe he falls into the greateſt miſery from the greateſt advantages and opportunities of being happy. Doſt thou lament the condition of *Socrates*, and *Cato*, and *Ariſtides*, and doubt what ſhall become of them at the day of Judgment? and canſt thou, who art an impious and prophane Chriſtian, think that thou ſhalt eſcape the damnation of Hell?

Doſt thou believe that the moral Heathen ſhall be caſt out? and canſt thou who haſt led a wicked life under the profeſſion of Chriſtianity have the impudence to hope that thou ſhalt ſit down with *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* in the Kingdom of God? No, thoſe ſins which are committed by Chriſtians under the enjoyment of the Goſpel are of deeper dye and cloathed with blacker aggravations than the ſins of Heathens are capable of. A Pagan may live without God in the world, and be unjuſt towards men, at a cheaper rate and upon eaſier terms than thou who art a Chriſtian. Better had it been thou hadſt never known one ſyllable of the Goſpel, never heard of the name of Chriſt than that having taken it upon thee thou ſhouldſt not *depart from iniquity.* Happy had it been for thee, that thou hadſt been born a *Jew*, or a *Turk*, or a poor *Indian*, rather than that being bred among Chriſtians, and profeſſing thy ſelf of that number, thou ſhouldſt lead a vicious and unholy life.

I have inſiſted the longer upon theſe arguments, that I might, if poſſible, awaken men to a ſerious conſideration of their lives, and perſuade them to a real reformation of them; that I may oblige all thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians to live up to the eſſential and fundamental Laws of our Religion; to love God, and to love our neighbour; to do to every man as we would have him to do to us, to mortify our luſts, and ſubdue our paſſions, and ſincerely to endeavour to grow in every grace and virtue, and to abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God.

This indeed would become our profeſſion and be honourable to our Religion, and would remove one of the greateſt obſtacles to the progreſs of the Goſpel. For how can we expect that the doctrine of God our Saviour ſhould gain any conſiderable ground in the world, ſo long as by the unworthy lives of ſo many Chriſtians 'tis repreſented to the world at ſo great diſadvantage; If ever we would have Chriſtian Religion effectually

ally recommended, it muſt be by the holy and unblameable lives of thoſe who make profeſſion of it. Then indeed it would look with ſo amiable a countenance as to invite many to it, and carry ſo much majeſty and authority in it as to command reverence from its greateſt enemies, and make men to acknowledge that God is in us of a truth, and to glorify our Father which is in Heaven.

The good God grant that as we have taken upon us the profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſo we may be careful ſo to live that we may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; that the grace of God which bringeth ſalvation may teach us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world; looking for that bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, &c.

N SERMON

SERMON VIII.

Of the Happineſs of a Heavenly Converſation.

PHIL. III. 20.

For our Converſation is in Heaven.

FOR the underſtanding of which words we need to look back no further than the 18*th. verſe* of this *Chapter*, where the Apoſtle with great vehemency and paſſion ſpeaks of ſome among the *Philippians*, who indeed profeſs'd Chriſtianity but yet would do any thing to decline ſuffering for that profeſſion; *there are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the Croſs of Chriſt*; they cannot endure to ſuffer with him and for him, they are ſo ſenſual and wedded to this world that they will do any thing to avoid perſecution; ſo he deſcribes them in the next *verſe*, *whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their belly, whoſe glory is in their ſhame, who mind earthly things.* Now in oppoſition to theſe ſenſual and earthly-minded men the Apoſtle gives us the character of the true Chriſtians, they are ſuch as mind Heaven and another world, and prefer the hopes of that to all the intereſts of this life, *our converſation is in Heaven.*

For the right underſtanding of which *phraſe* be pleaſed to obſerve that it is an alluſion to a City or Corporation, and to the privileges and manners of thoſe who are free of it. And Heaven is ſeveral times in Scripture repreſented to us under this notion of a *City*. It is ſaid of *Abraham* that *he* Heb. 11. 10. *looked for a City which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God.* It is called likewiſe *the City of the living God, the heavenly Jeruſalem.* And Heb. 12. 22. the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaking of the uncertain condition of Chriſtians in this Heb. 14. 14. world ſays of them, that *here they have no continuing City, but look for one that is to come.*

Now to this *City* the Apoſtle alludes here in the Text, when he ſays *our converſation is in Heaven* For the word πολίτευμα, which is rendred *converſation*, may either ſignify the *privilege* of Citizens, or their *converſation* and manners, or may take in both theſe.

In the *firſt* ſenſe of the *priviledge* of Citizens, we find πολιτεία a word of Acts 22. 28. near affinity with this ſometimes us'd; *with a great ſum* (ſays the Captain to *Paul*) *obtained I* τὴν πολιτείαν ταύτην, *this freedom.* According to this ſenſe, ἡμῶν τὸ πολίτευμα may very well be rendred, as *Tertullian* often does this Text, *municipatus noſter, our Citizenſhip is in Heaven*; an alluſion perhaps (as the learned Dr. *Hammond* obſerves) to thoſe who though they were not born at *Rome*, and it may be lived at a great diſtance from it, had yet *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the privilege of *Roman* Citizens. In like manner the Apoſtle here deſcribes the condition of Chriſtians. 'Tis true, we are born here in this world and live in it, but we belong to another Corporation; we are denizens of another Countrey and free of that City which is above.

In the other ſenſe of the *converſation* of Citizens we find the verb πολιτεύεσθε uſed towards the beginning of this *Epiſtle, Let your converſation be as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt.* Phil. 1.27. And why may not the word πολίτευμα in the Text, without any inconvenience include both theſe? as if the Apoſtle had ſaid, there are ſome that mind earthly things, and are ſo addicted to them that rather than part with them they will forſake their Religion; but as for us, we conſider that we are Citizens of Heaven, and accordingly we converſe and demean our ſelves in this world as thoſe that are free of another City and do belong to it.

So that to have *our converſation in heaven* does imply theſe two things.

Firſt, The ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of Heaven.

Secondly, The effect which thoſe thoughts ought to have upon our lives.

Theſe two things take up the meaning of my Text, and ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

I. The ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of Heaven, that is, of the happy and glorious ſtate of good men in another life. And concerning this, there are two things principally which offer themſelves to our conſideration. *Firſt,* The happineſs of this ſtate. *Secondly,* The way and means whereby we may come to partake of this happineſs.

Firſt, We will conſider the happineſs of this ſtate. But what, and how great this happineſs is, I am not able to repreſent to you. Theſe things are yet in a great meaſure within the veil, and it does not now fully *appear what we ſhall be.* The Scriptures have reveal'd ſo much in general concerning the reality and unſpeakable felicities of this ſtate as may ſatisfy us for the preſent, and ſerve to inflame our deſires after it, and to quicken our endeavours for the obtaining of it; as *namely,* that it is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world; that it is very great; and that it is eternal; in a word, that it is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine.

1. It is incomparably beyond any happineſs in this world. It is free from all thoſe ſharp and bitter ingredients which do abate and allay the felicities of this life. All the enjoyments of this world are mix'd, and uncertain, and unſatisfying; nay ſo far are they from giving us ſatisfaction, that the very ſweeteſt of them are ſatiating and cloying.

None of the comforts of this life are pure and unmixt. There is ſomething of *vanity* mingled with all our earthly enjoyments, and *that* cauſeth *vexation of ſpirit.* There is no ſenſual pleaſure but is either purchas'd by ſome pain, or attended with it, or ends in it. A great eſtate is neither to be got without care, nor kept without fear, nor loſt without trouble. Dignity and greatneſs is troubleſome almoſt to all mankind, it is commonly uneaſy to them that have it, and it is uſually hated and envy'd by thoſe that have it not. Knowledge, that is one of the beſt and ſweeteſt pleaſures of humane life; and yet if we may believe the experience of one, who had as great a ſhare of it as any of the Sons of men ever had, he will tell us, that *this alſo is vexation of ſpirit; for in much wiſdom there is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge, increaſeth ſorrow.* Eccleſ. 1. 17, 18.

Thus it is with all the things of this world; the beſt of them have a mixture of good and evil, of joy and ſorrow in them: But the happineſs of the next life is free from allay and mixture. In the deſcription of the *new Jeruſalem* it is ſaid, that *there ſhall be no more curſe, and there ſhall be no night there,* nothing to imbitter our bleſſings, or obſcure our glory. Heaven is the proper region of happineſs, there only are pure joys and an unmingled felicity. Rev. 22. 3, 5.

But the enjoyments of this world as they are mix'd, ſo they are uncertain. So wavering and inconſtant are they that we can have no ſecurity of them, when we think our ſelves to have the faſteſt hold of them they ſlip out of our hands we know not how. For this reaſon *Solomon* very elegantly calls them things *that are not, Why wilt thou ſet thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make to themſelves wings and fly like an Eagle towards heaven.* So fugitive are they, that after all our endeavours to ſecure them they may break looſe from us, and in an inſtant vaniſh out of our ſight, *riches make to themſelves wings, and fly like an Eagle,* intimating to us that riches are often acceſſary to their own ruin. Many times the greatneſs of a man's eſtate, and nothing elſe, hath been the cauſe of the loſs of it, and of taking away the life of the owner thereof. The *fairneſs* of ſome mens fortune hath been a temptation to thoſe who have been more powerful to *raviſh* it from them, thus *riches make to themſelves wings.* So that he that enjoys the greateſt happineſs of this world does ſtill want one happineſs more, to ſecure to him for the future what he poſſeſſes for the preſent. But the happineſs of Heaven is a ſteady and conſtant light, fix'd and unchangeable as the fountain from whence it ſprings, *the father of lights, with whom is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning.*

And if the enjoyments of this life were certain, yet they are unſatisfying. This is the *vanity of vanities,* that every thing in this world can trouble us but nothing can give us ſatisfaction. I know not how it is, but either we, or the things of this world, or both, are ſo phantaſtical, that we can neither be well with theſe things, nor well without them. If we be hungry, we are in pain; and if we eat to the full, we are uneaſy. If we be poor we think our ſelves miſerable, and when we come to be rich we commonly really are ſo. If we are in a low condition we fret and murmur, and if we chance to get up and to be rais'd to greatneſs we are many times farther from contentment than we were before. So that we purſue the happineſs of this world juſt as little children chaſe birds, when we think we are come very near it and have it almoſt in our hands it flies farther from us than it was at firſt.

Nay, ſo far are the enjoyments of this world from affording us ſatisfaction, that the ſweeteſt of them are moſt apt to ſatiate and cloy us. All the pleaſures of this world are ſo contriv'd as to yield us very little happineſs. If they go off quickly they ſignify nothing, and if they ſtay long we are ſick of them. After a full draught of any ſenſual pleaſure we preſently loathe it, and hate it as much after the enjoyment as we courted it and long'd for it in the expectation. But the delights of the other world, as they will give us full ſatisfaction ſo we ſhall never be weary of them. Every repetition of them will be accompanied with a new pleaſure and contentment. In the felicities of Heaven theſe two things ſhall be reconcil'd, which never met together in any ſenſual delight, long and full enjoyment and yet a freſh and perpetual pleaſure. As in God's *preſence there is fulneſs of joy,* ſo *at his right hand there ſhall be pleaſures for evermore.*

2. The happineſs of the other life is not only incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world (that, it may be, is no great commendation of it)

it) but it is very great in it ſelf. The happineſs of Heaven is uſually in Scripture deſcrib'd to us by ſuch pleaſures as are manly and excellent, chaſte and intellectual, infinitely more pure and refin'd than thoſe of ſenſe; and if the Scripture at any time deſcend to the metaphors of a *feaſt*, and a *banquet*, and a *marriage*, it is plainly by way of accommodation to our weakneſs and condeſcention to our capacities.

But the chief ingredients of this happineſs, ſo far as the Scripture hath thought fit to reveal it to us, are the perfection of our knowledge, and the height of our love, and the perpetual ſociety and friendſhip of all the bleſſed inhabitants of thoſe glorious manſions; and the joyful concurrence of all theſe in chearful expreſſions of gratitude, in the inceſſant praiſes and admiration of the fountain and author of all this happineſs. And what can be more delightful than to have our underſtandings entertain'd with a clear ſight of the beſt and moſt perfect Being, with the knowledge of all his works and of the wiſe deſigns of his providence here in the world? than to live in the reviving preſence of God, and to be continually attending upon him whoſe favour is life, and whoſe glory is much more above that of any of the Princes of this world than the greateſt of them is above the pooreſt worm? The Queen of *Sheba* thought *Solomon*'s Servants happy in having the opportunity by ſtanding continually before him to hear his wiſdom; but in the other world it ſhall be a happineſs to *Solomon* himſelf, and to the wiſeſt and greateſt perſons that ever were in this world, to ſtand before this great King to admire his wiſdom and to behold his glory. Not that I imagine the happineſs of Heaven to conſiſt in a perpetual gazing upon God, and in an idle contemplation of the glories of that place. For as by that bleſſed ſight we ſhall be infinitely tranſported, ſo the Scripture tells us we ſhall be alſo transform'd into the image of the divine perfections; *we ſhall ſee God, and we ſhall be like him*, and what greater happineſs can there be than to be like the happieſt and moſt perfect Being in the world? Beſides, who can tell what employment God may have for us in the next life? We need not doubt but that he who is happineſs it ſelf, and hath promis'd to make us happy, can eaſily find out ſuch employments and delights for us in the other world as will be proper and ſuitable to that ſtate.

But then beſides the improvement of our knowledge there ſhall be the moſt delightful exerciſe of love. When we come to heaven we ſhall enter into the ſociety of the bleſſed Angels and of *the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*, that is, freed from all thoſe paſſions and infirmities which do now render the converſation, even of the beſt men, ſometimes troubleſome to one another. We ſhall then meet with all thoſe excellent Perſons, thoſe brave Minds, thoſe innocent and charitable Souls whom we have ſeen, and heard, and read of in this world. There we ſhall meet with many of our dear relations and intimate friends, and perhaps with many of our enemies, to whom we ſhall then be perfectly reconcil'd notwithſtanding all the warm conteſts and peeviſh differences which we had with them in this world, even about matters of Religion. For Heaven is a ſtate of perfect love and friendſhip, there will be nothing but kindneſs and good nature there, and all the prudent Arts of endearment and wiſe ways of rendring converſation mutually pleaſant to one another. And what greater happineſs can be imagin'd than to converſe freely with ſo many excellent perſons, without any thing of folly or diſguiſe, of jealouſy or deſign upon one another? For then there will be none of thoſe vices and paſſions, of covetouſneſs and ambition, of envy and hatred, of wrath and peeviſhneſs, which do now ſo much ſpoil the pleaſure and diſturb the quiet of mankind. All quarrels and contentions, ſchiſms and diviſions will then be effectually hinder'd, not by force but by love, not by compulſion but by that *charity which never fails;* and all thoſe controverſies in Religion which are now ſo hotly agitated will then be finally determin'd, not as we endeavour to end them now by Canons and Decrees, but by a perfect knowledge and convincing light.

And when this bleſſed ſociety is met together, and thus united by love, they ſhall all join in gratitude to their great Patrons and Benefactors, *to him that ſits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was ſlain, to God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath lov'd us and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood.* And they ſhall ſing everlaſting ſongs of praiſe to God for all his works of wonder, for the effects of that infinite goodneſs, and admirable wiſdom, and almighty power, which are clearly ſeen in the creation and government of the world and of all the Creatures in it; particularly for his favours to mankind, for the benefit of their beings, for the comfort of their lives, and for all his merciful providences towards them in this world: But above all for the redemption of their ſouls by the death of his Son, for the free forgiveneſs of their ſins, for the gracious aſſiſtance of his holy Spirit, and for conducting them ſafely through all the ſnares and dangers, the troubles and temptations of this world to the ſecure poſſeſſion of that glory and happineſs which then they ſhall be partakers of, and are bound to praiſe God for to all eternity. This, this ſhall be the employment of the bleſſed ſpirits above, and theſe are the chief ingredients of our happineſs which the Scripture mentions. And if there were no other, as there may be ten thouſand more for any thing I can tell, yet generous and virtuous minds will eaſily underſtand how great a pleaſure there is in the improvement of our knowledge, and the exerciſe of love, and in a grateful and perpetual acknowledgment of the greateſt benefits that creatures are capable of receiving.

3. This happineſs ſhall be eternal. And though this be but a circumſtance and do not enter into the nature of our happineſs, yet it is ſo material a one that all the felicities which heaven affords would be imperfect without it. It would ſtrangely damp and allay all our joys to think that they ſhould ſometime have an end. And the greater our happineſs were, the greater trouble it would be to us to conſider that it muſt have a period. It would make a man ſorrowful indeed to think of leaving ſuch vaſt poſſeſſions. Indeed if the happineſs of heaven were ſuch as the joys of this world are, it were fit they ſhould be as ſhort; for after a little enjoyment it would cloy us, and we ſhould ſoon grow weary of it. But being ſo excellent, it would ſcarce be a happineſs if it were not eternal. It would imbitter the pleaſures of heaven, as great as they are, to ſee to an end of them, though it were at never ſo great a diſtance; to conſider that all this vaſt treaſure of happineſs would one day be exhauſted, and that after ſo many years were paſt we ſhould be as poor and miſerable again as we were once in this world. God hath ſo order'd things, that the vain and empty delights of this world ſhould be temporary and tranſient, but that the great and ſubſtantial pleaſures of the other world ſhould be as laſting as they are excellent. For Heaven as it is an *exceeding*, ſo it is *an eternal weight of glory.* And this is that which crowns the joys of heaven and baniſhes all fear and trouble from the minds of the bleſſed. And thus to be ſecur'd in the poſſeſſion of our happineſs is an unſpeakable addition to it. For that which is eternal as it ſhall never determine, ſo it can never be diminiſh'd;

for to be diminiſh'd and to decay is to draw nearer to an end, but that which ſhall never have an end can never come nearer to it.

O vaſt *eternity!* how doſt thou ſwallow up our thoughts and entertain us at once with delight and amazement? This is the very top and higheſt pitch of our happineſs, upon which we may ſtand ſecure and look down with ſcorn upon all things here below; and how ſmall and inconſiderable do they appear to us, compar'd with the vaſt and endleſs enjoyments of our future ſtate? But oh vain and fooliſh ſouls! that are ſo little concern'd for eternity; that for the trifles of time, and *the pleaſures of ſin which are but for a ſeaſon,* can find in our hearts to forfeit an everlaſting felicity. Bleſſed God! why haſt thou prepar'd ſuch a happineſs for thoſe who neither conſider it, nor ſeek after it? *Why is* ſuch *a price put into the hands of fools, who have no heart to make uſe of it*; who fondly chuſe to gratify their luſts rather than to ſave their ſouls, and ſottiſhly prefer the temporary enjoyments of ſin before a bleſſed immortality?

4. And laſtly, This happineſs is far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. It is ſo great, that it cannot now *enter into the heart of man.* We cannot from the experience of any of thoſe pleaſures and delights which we have been acquainted withal in this world frame an equal *Idea* and conception of it. So that when we come to Heaven we ſhall be ready to ſay of it as the Queen of *Sheba* did of *Solomon*'s wiſdom and proſperity, that *half of it hath not been told us*; that the felicities and glories of that ſtate do far exceed all the fame which we heard of them in this world. For who can ſay how great a good God is? and how happy he who is the fountain of happineſs can make thoſe ſouls that love him, and thoſe whom he loves?

In this imperfect ſtate we are not capable of a full repreſentation of thoſe glories. *We cannot* now *ſee God and live.* A full deſcription of Heaven and of the pleaſures of that ſtate would let in joys upon us too big for our narrow capacities, and too ſtrong for weak mortality to bear. *We are now but Children, and we ſpeak as Children, and underſtand* and think *as Children* concerning theſe things; but in the other ſtate we ſhall grow up *to be men,* and then we ſhall *put away* theſe *childiſh* thoughts; *now we know but in part, but when that which is perfect is come, that which is imperfect ſhall be done away; now we ſee through a glaſs darkly* (ἐν αἰνίγματι, *in a riddle) but then we ſhall ſee face to face; now we know in part, but then we ſhall know even as alſo we are known,* as the Apoſtle diſcourſeth excellently concerning this very matter. 1 Cor. 13. 9, 10, 11.

No ſooner ſhall we enter upon the joys of the other world, but our minds ſhall be rais'd to a ſtrength and activity as much above that of the moſt knowing perſons in this world as the thoughts of the greateſt Philoſopher and wiſeſt man upon earth are above the thoughts of a child or a fool. No man's mind is now ſo well fram'd to underſtand any thing in this world, as our underſtandings ſhall then be fitted for the knowledge of God and of the things that belong to that ſtate. In the mean time let us bleſs God that he hath reveal'd ſo much of this happineſs to us as is neceſſary to excite and encourage us to ſeek after it.

The *Second* thing to be conſider'd concerning our future happineſs, is the way and means whereby we may come to be made partakers of it. And that in ſhort is by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, in and through the mercies of God in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Chriſt indeed is the author of our ſalvation, but obedience is the condition of it;

Heb. 5. 1. ſo the Apoſtle tells us, that Chriſt *is the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.* It is *the grace of God* in the Goſpel *which brings* or offers Tit. 2. 11, 12. this *ſalvation* to us, but then it is by the *denying of ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and by *living ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world* that we are *to wait for the bleſſed hope.* Our Saviour promiſes this happineſs to the pure in heart, *Bleſſed are the pure in heart, for they ſhall ſee God*; and elſewhere the Scripture doth exclude all others from any ſhare or portion in this bleſſedneſs, ſo the Apoſtle aſſures us Heb. 18. 14. *that without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

And holineſs is not only a condition but a neceſſary qualification for the happineſs of the next life. This is the force of St. *John*'s reaſoning, *we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him.* To *ſee God* is to be happy, but unleſs we be like him we cannot ſee him. The ſight and preſence of God himſelf would be no happineſs to that man who is not like to God in the temper and diſpoſition of his mind. And from hence the Apoſtle infers in the next *verſe, every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.* So that if we live wicked lives, if we allow our ſelves in the practice of any known ſin, we interrupt our hopes of Heaven and render our ſelves unfit for eternal life. By this means we defeat all the deſigns of God's grace and mercy towards us, and ſalvation it ſelf cannot ſave us if we make our ſelves incapable of that happineſs which God offers. Heaven is in Scripture call'd *an inheritance among them that are ſanctified*, and *the inheritance of the Saints in light*; ſo that it is not enough that this *inheritance* is promis'd to us, but we muſt be qualified and prepar'd for it, and *be made meet to be made partakers of it.*

And this life is the time of our preparation for our future ſtate. Our ſouls will continue for ever what we make them in this world. Such a temper and diſpoſition of mind as a man carries with him out of this life he ſhall retain in the next. 'Tis true indeed, heaven perfects thoſe holy and virtuous diſpoſitions which are begun here; but the other world alters no man as to his main ſtate, *he that is filthy will be filthy ſtill*, and *he that is unrighteous will be unrighteous* ſtill. If we do not in a good degree mortify our luſts and paſſions here, death will not kill them for us, but we ſhall carry them with us into the other world. And if God ſhould admit us ſo qualified into the place of happineſs, yet we ſhall bring that along with us which would infallibly hinder us from being happy. Our ſenſual inclinations and deſires would meet with nothing there that would be ſuitable to them, and we ſhould be perpetually tormented with thoſe appetites which we brought with us out of this world, becauſe we ſhould find nothing there to gratify them withal. For as the Apoſtle ſays in another ſenſe, *The kingdom of God is not meats and drinks, but righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* The happineſs of heaven conſiſts in ſuch things as a wicked man hath no guſt and reliſh for. So that if a covetous, or ambitious, or voluptuous man were in Heaven, he would be juſt like the rich man in Hell, tormented with a continual thirſt, and burnt up in the flames of his own ardent deſires; and would not be able, amidſt all the plenty and treaſures of that place, to find ſo much as one drop of ſuitable pleaſure and delight to quench and allay that heat. So likewiſe our fierce and unruly paſſions; if we ſhould carry them with us into the other world, how inconſiſtent would they be with happineſs? They would not only make us miſerable our ſelves, but be a trouble to all thoſe with whom we ſhould converſe. If a man of an envious and malicious, of a peeviſh and paſſionate temper, were admitted into the manſions of the bleſſed, he would not only be unhappy himſelf, but would diſturb the quiet of others, and raiſe ſtorms even in thoſe calm regions. Vain man! that dreameſt of being happy without any diſpoſition or preparation for it. To be happy, is to enjoy what we deſire and to live with thoſe whom we love. But there is nothing in heaven ſuitable to the deſires and appetites of a wicked man. All the joys of that place, and the delights of that ſtate are purely ſpiritual, and are only to be reliſh'd by thoſe who have *purified themſelves as God is pure.* But if thou be carnal and ſenſual, what are theſe things to thee? What happineſs would it be to thee to ſee God, and to have him always in thy view who was never in all thy thoughts; to be tied to live for ever in his company who is of a quite contrary temper and diſpoſition to thy ſelf, whoſe preſence thou dreadeſt, and whom whilſt thou waſt in this world thou couldſt never endure to think upon? So that the pleaſures of Heaven it ſelf could ſignify no good or happineſs to that man who is not ſo diſpos'd as to take pleaſure in them. Heaven is too pure an air for corrupt ſouls to live and breathe in, and the whole employment and converſation of that place, as it would be unſuitable, ſo would it alſo be unacceptable to a ſenſual and vicious perſon.

From all this it appears how neceſſary it is for us to prepare our ſelves for this bleſſed ſtate, by the conſtant and ſincere endeavours of a holy life, and by mortifying every luſt and inordinate paſſion in our ſouls. For till this be done we are not meet to be made partakers of the felicities of the other world. And thus I have done with the *firſt* thing imply'd in this phraſe *of having our converſation in heaven*, *viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of heaven; or the happineſs of that ſtate, and of the way and means whereby that happineſs is to be attained.

II. The *having our converſation in heaven* does imply likewiſe the effect which thoſe conſiderations ought to have upon our hearts and lives: As

1. To convince us of the vanity of this world. God hath on purpoſe made this world troubleſome and uneaſy to us, that there might be no ſufficient temptation to reaſonable and conſiderate men to take them off from the care and thought of their future happineſs; that God and heaven might have no rival here below; that there might be nothing in this world that might pretend to our affection or court us with any advantage in compariſon of everlaſting life and glory.

When we come to dye and eternity ſhall preſent it ſelf to our ſerious and waking thoughts, then things will put on another face, and thoſe things which we valued ſo much in this life will then appear to be nothing worth; but thoſe things which we neglected, to be of infinite concernment to us, and worthy to have been the care and endeavour of our whole lives. And if we would conſider theſe things in time, while the opportunities of life and health are before us, we might be convinc'd at a cheaper rate, and come to be ſatisfied of the vanity of this world before we deſpair'd of the happineſs of the other.

2. To make us very active and induſtrious to be as good, and to do as much good as we can in this life, that ſo we may be qualified and diſpos'd for the happineſs of the next. Men are uſually very induſtrious for the things of this life, to be rich and great in the world; did we but value heaven half as much as it deſerves we ſhould take infinitely more pains

for that. So often as we conſider the glories that are above, how does it accuſe our ſloth and condemn our folly that we are leſs concerned for our ſouls than moſt men are for their bodies, that we will not labour half ſo much for an eternal inheritance as men ordinarily do for theſe corruptible things?

Let us remember that we are haſting apace to another world, and that our eternal happineſs now lies at the ſtake. And how ſhould it quicken our endeavours to have ſuch a reward ſet before us, to have Crowns and Scepters in our eyes? would we but often repreſent to our minds the glorious things of another world, what fervors ſhould we feel in our hearts? we ſhould be all life, and ſpirit, and wing; and ſhould do God's will, almoſt with the ſame readineſs and delight, as the *Angels* do *who continually behold the face of their Father*. The conſideration of heaven and the firm perſuaſion of our future happineſs ſhould actuate all the powers of our ſouls, and be continually inſpiring us with new vigor in the ways of holineſs and virtue. How ſhould this thought ſwell our reſolutions and confirm our purpoſes of obedience, that if we have our *fruit unto holineſs* our *end will be everlaſting life?*

3. To mitigate and lighten the evils and afflictions of this life. It is no great matter how rough the way be provided we be ſure that it leads to happineſs. The incomparably greater good of the next life will to a wiſe and conſiderate man weigh down all the evils of this. And the Scripture tells us that there is no compariſon between them. Rom. 8. 18. *The ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhall be revealed in us.* The evils of this life afflict men more or leſs according as the ſoul is fortified with conſiderations proper to ſupport us under them. When we conſider that we have but a little while to be here, that we are upon our journey travelling towards our heavenly Countrey where we ſhall meet with all the delights we can deſire, it ought not to trouble us much to endure ſtorms and foul ways, and to want many of thoſe accommodations we might expect at home. This is the common fate of Travellers, and we muſt take things as we find them and not look to have every thing juſt to our mind. Theſe difficulties and inconveniences will ſhortly be over, and after a few days will be quite forgotten, and be to us as if they had never been. And when we are ſafely landed in our own Countrey, with what pleaſure ſhall we look back upon thoſe rough and boiſterous Seas which we have eſcap'd? The more troubles we have paſt through the kinder uſage we ſhall find when we come to our Father's houſe. So the Apoſtle tells us, that *our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* When we come to heaven our happineſs ſhall then be as real as our miſeries were here upon earth, and far greater and more laſting. And what great matter is it though we ſuffer a while in this world, provided we eſcape the endleſs unſufferable torments of the next; though we have not our good things in this life, if infinitely greater be reſerv'd for us, and we ſhall receive them with intereſt in the other?

Several of the evils and calamities of this life would be unſufferable indeed, if there were nothing better to be hoped for hereafter. If this were true, Chriſtians would not only be of all *men* but of all *creatures the moſt miſerable.* But our Religion hath abundantly aſſur'd us to the contrary. And the aſſurance of this was that which made the primitive Chriſtians to embrace ſufferings with ſo much cheerfulneſs, *to glory* *in tribulation*, and *to take joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and more enduring ſubſtance.* The ſeven brethren in the Hiſtory of the *Maccabees* upon this perſuaſion would *not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection.* That ſtorm of ſtones which was pour'd upon St. *Stephen* was no more to him than a common ſhower when *he ſaw the heavens open'd*; and *Jeſus* (in whoſe cauſe he ſuffer'd) *ſtanding on the right hand of God.*

4. To make us ſincere in all our profeſſions, words and actions. Did men firmly believe the rewards of another world their Religion would not be only in ſhew and pretence, but in life and reality, no man would put on a *form of godlineſs* that were deſtitute of *the power of it*; we ſhould do nothing for the opinion of others, but all with regard to God and our own Conſciences; and be as curious of our thoughts, and moſt retir'd actions, as if we were in an open theatre and in the preſence of the greateſt aſſembly. For in the next life men ſhall not be rewarded for what they ſeem'd to be, but for what they really were in this world. Therefore whatever we think, or ſpeak, or do, we ſhould always remember that the day of revelation is coming, when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be diſclos'd, when all diſguiſes ſhall be laid aſide, and every one's mask ſhall be taken off, and all our actions and deſigns ſhall be brought upon the publick ſtage and expos'd to the view of men and Angels. *There is nothing now hidden which ſhall not* then *be reveal'd, nor ſecret which ſhall not be made known.*

5. To arm us againſt the fears of death. Death is terrible to nature, and the terror of it is infinitely increas'd by the fearful apprehenſions of what may follow it. But the comfortable hopes of a bleſſed immortality do ſtrangely relieve the fainting ſpirits of dying men, and are able to reconcile us to death, and in a great meaſure to take away the terror of it. I know that the thoughts of death are diſmal even to good men, and we have never more need of comfort and encouragement than when we are conflicting with this laſt Enemy, and there is no ſuch comfortable conſideration to a dying man as the hopes of a happy eternity. He that looks upon death only as a paſſage to glory, may welcome the meſſengers of it as bringing him the beſt and moſt joyful news that ever came to him in his whole life; and no man can ſtay behind in this world with half the comfort that this man leaves it.

And now I have done with the *two* things implied in this phraſe, of *having our converſation in heaven*, *viz.* the ſerious thoughts and conſiderations of heaven, and the effect of theſe thoughts and conſiderations upon our hearts and lives.

I crave your patience but a little longer, till I make ſome reflection upon what hath been deliver'd concerning the happineſs of good men after this life. I have told you that it is incomparably beyond any happineſs of this world, that it is great in it ſelf, and eternal in its duration, and far above any thing that we can now conceive or imagine. And now after all this, I am very ſenſible how much all that I have ſaid comes ſhort of the greatneſs and dignity of the thing. So that I could almoſt begin again and make a new attempt upon this ſubject. And indeed who would not be loth to be taken off from ſo delightful an argument? Methinks 'tis good for us to be here, and to let our minds dwell upon theſe conſiderations. We are unworthy of heaven and unfit to partake of ſo great a glory, if we cannot take pleaſure in the contemplation of thoſe things now, the poſſeſſion whereof ſhall be our happineſs for ever.

With what joy then ſhould we think of thoſe *great and glorious things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him, of that inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, which fadeth not away, reſerved for us in the heavens?* How ſhould we welcome the thoughts of that happy hour when we ſhall make our eſcape out of theſe priſons, when we ſhall paſs out *of this howling wilderneſs* into *the promis'd Land*, when we ſhall be remov'd from all the troubles and temptations of a wicked and ill-natured world; when we ſhall be paſt all ſtorms, and ſecur'd from all further danger of ſhipwreck, and ſhall be ſafely landed in the regions of bliſs and immortality?

O bleſſed time! *When all tears ſhall be wip'd from our eyes*, and *death and ſorrow ſhall be no more*; When *mortality* ſhall *be ſwallowed up of life*, and we ſhall enter upon the poſſeſſion of all that happineſs and glory which God hath promis'd, and our faith hath believ'd, and our hopes have rais'd us to the expectation of; when we ſhall be eas'd of all our pains, and reſolv'd of all our doubts, and be purg'd from all our ſins and be freed from all our fears, and be happy beyond all our hopes, and have all the happineſs ſecur'd to us beyond the power of time and change: When we ſhall know God and other things without ſtudy, and love him and one another without meaſure, and ſerve and praiſe him without wearineſs, and obey his will without the leaſt reluctancy; and ſhall ſtill be more and more delighted in the knowing, and loving, and praiſing, and obeying of God to all eternity.

How ſhould theſe thoughts affect our hearts, and what a mighty influence ought they to have upon our lives? The great diſadvantage of the arguments fetch'd from another world is this, that thoſe things are at a great diſtance from us, and not ſenſible to us; and therefore are not apt to affect us ſo ſtrongly, and to work ſo powerfully upon us. Now to make amends for this diſadvantage we ſhould often revive theſe conſiderations upon our mind, and inculcate upon our ſelves the reality and certainty of theſe things together with the infinite weight and importance of them. We ſhould reaſon thus with our ſelves; If good men ſhall be ſo unſpeakably happy, and conſequently wicked men ſo extremely miſerable in another world: If theſe things be true and will one day be found to be ſo, why ſhould they not be to me as if they were already preſent? why ſhould not I be as much afraid to commit any ſin as if hell were naked before me, and I ſaw the aſtoniſhing miſeries of the damned? and why ſhould I not be as careful to ſerve God and keep his commandments, as if heaven were open to my view, and I ſaw *Jeſus* ſtanding at the right hand of God with crowns of glory in his hand ready to be ſet upon the heads of all thoſe who continue faithful to him?

The lively apprehenſions of the nearneſs of death and eternity are apt to make mens thoughts more quick and piercing, and according as we think our ſelves prepar'd for our future ſtate to tranſport us with joy, or to amaze us with horror. For the ſoul that is fully ſatisfied of his future bliſs is already entred into heaven, has begun to take poſſeſſion of glory, and has (as it were) his bleſſed Saviour in his arms, and may ſay with old *Simeon, Lord, now letteſt thou thy ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have ſeen thy ſalvation.* But the thoughts of death muſt needs be very terrible to that man who is doubtful or deſpairing of his future condition. It would daunt the ſtouteſt man that ever breathed, to look upon death when he can ſee nothing but hell beyond it. When the Apparition at *Endor* told *Saul*, *To morrow thou and thy Sons ſhall be with me*, theſe words ſtruck him to the heart, ſo that *he fell down to the ground, and there was no more ſtrength left in him.* It is as certain that we ſhall dye as if an expreſs meſſenger ſhould come to every one of us from the other world and tell us ſo. Why ſhould we not then always live as thoſe that muſt dye, and as thoſe that hope to be happy after death? To have theſe apprehenſions vigorous and lively upon our minds, this is *to have our converſation in heaven, from whence alſo we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall change our vile body that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf.*

SERMON IX.

Of the End of Judgments, and the Reaſon of their Continuance.

ISA. XIX. 12, 13.

For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill: For the people turneth not unto him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of Hoſts.

IN the former part of this 12th *verſe*, the *Prophet* threatens that *Iſrael* ſhould be brought into great diſtreſs and ſet upon by Enemies on every ſide, *the Syrians before and the Philiſtines behind*, and that they ſhould *devour Iſrael with open mouth:* And though this was like to be a very ſore and dreadful judgment, yet he foretells that this would not ſtay God's hand nor ſatisfy his anger, becauſe he foreſaw that they would ſtill grow worſe and continue impenitent. *For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill: For the people turneth not unto him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of Hoſts.*

In which words there are theſe two things very uſeful at all times, but at this time eſpecially moſt proper and ſeaſonable for our conſideration.

1. *The deſign and intention of God in ſending Judgments upon a People*; and that is *to reclaim them from their ſins*, implied in theſe words, *For the People turneth not to him that ſmiteth them*; which intimate to us that this is the end which God aims at in his Judgments to take us off from our ſins and to bring us to himſelf.

2. The reaſon of the continuance of God's Judgments, becauſe the People were not reclaimed by them. And this is fully expreſs'd in the *Text*, that therefore *God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill, becauſe the People turneth not unto him that ſmiteth them*, &c.

Of theſe *Two* I crave leave to ſpeak, as plainly and briefly as I can.

1. *The deſign and intention of God in ſending Judgments upon a people*; And that is *to reclaim them from their ſins.* This indeed is the intention of all God's diſpenſations towards us in this world. The end of all his mercies and benefits is to take us off from ſin, and to oblige and win us to our duty: So the *Apoſtle* tells us, *Rom.* 2. 4. That the deſign of God's *goodneſs and long-ſuffering and forbearance towards us*, is, *to lead us to Repentance.*

And this is the way wherein God delights to deal with us. The way of Judgment and ſeverity is that which he is more averſe from, a courſe which he unwillingly takes with us and not without ſome difficulty and reluctancy. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men:* and were it not that we are ſuch perverſe Creatures as not to be wrought upon by kindneſs, ſo wild as not to be tamed by gentle uſage, God would not handle us in any other way. It is our obſtinacy and intractableneſs to the methods of his goodneſs which conſtraineth, and almoſt forceth him againſt his inclination, to take the Rod into his hand, and to chaſtiſe us with it. He would draw us with *the cords of love* and *the bands of a man*, (as he expreſſeth himſelf in the *Prophet*) but we will not follow him: And therefore we provoke him to turn theſe cords into whips, and to change the gentle methods of his kindneſs into ways of harſhneſs and ſeverity.

And yet when he comes to take this courſe with us, he ſtill like a kind and tender-hearted Father aims at our benefit and advantage. He deſigns kindneſs to the ſons of men by all thoſe Judgments which do not kill them and cut them off from the opportunity and poſſibility of improving them. If he ſends evils upon us, it is that thereby he may do us ſome greater good: If he afflict us, it is not becauſe it is pleaſant to him to deal harſhly with us, but becauſe it is profitable and neceſſary for us to be ſo dealt with: And if at any time he imbitter our lives by miſeries and ſufferings, it is becauſe he is loath to ſee us periſh in pleaſant ways, and chuſeth rather to be ſomewhat ſevere towards us than ſuffer us to be utterly undone.

This *Moſes* declares to have been the great end of all the ſevere Providences of God towards the People of *Iſrael* in their long wandring in the Wilderneſs, and all the difficulties and hardſhips they were there exerciſed withal for the ſpace of forty years, *Deut.* 8. 15, 16. *Who led thee through that great and terrible Wilderneſs, wherein were fiery Serpents and Scorpions,* &c. *That he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.*

So that the afflicting providences of God are not only apt in their own nature to do us good, but which is a more expreſs argument of the Divine goodneſs God intends and aims at this end by them: He does not ſend Judgments upon this Theatre of the World for his ſport and paſtime, nor ſet on one part of his Creation to bait another for his own diverſion: He does not, like ſome of the cruel *Roman* Emperors, take pleaſure to exerciſe men with dangers and to ſee them play bloody prizes before him.

Nay He does nothing that is ſevere out of humour and paſſion; as our earthly Parents many times do. Indeed he is angry with us for our ſins, but yet ſo as ſtill to pity our perſons: And when his providence makes uſe of any ſharp and cutting inſtruments, it is with this merciful deſign, to let out our corruption: If he caſt us into the Furnace of affliction, it is that he may refine and purify us from our droſs.

So that though the Judgments of God be Evils in themſelves, yet conſidering the intentions of God in them they are no real objections againſt his goodneſs, but rather arguments for it; as will appear if we conſider theſe *three* things.

1. That the Judgments of God are proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind.

2. They are proper for the prevention of far greater Evils of the ſame kind.

3. They are not only proper to theſe Ends, but in many caſes very neceſſary.

Firſt, *The Judgments of God are very proper for the cure of a far greater Evil of another kind*; I mean the *Evil of Sin*. We take wrong meaſures of things, when we judge thoſe to be the greateſt evils which afflict our bodies, wound our reputation, and impoveriſh our Eſtates. For thoſe certainly are far the greateſt, which affect our nobleſt part; which vitiate our underſtandings, and deprave our wills, and wound and defile our ſouls.

What corrupt humours are to the body, that ſin is to the ſouls of men, their diſeaſe and their death.

Now it is very agreeable with the goodneſs and mercy of the Divine Providence, to adminiſter to us whatever is proper for the cure of ſo great an evil. If we make our ſelves ſick, that is our own folly, and no fault of the Phyſician; but we are beholden to him if he recover us, though it be by very bitter and unpleaſing means. All temporal Judgments which are ſhort of death, are properly medicinal; and if we will but ſuffer them to have their kindly operation upon us, they will work a cure; and how grievous and diſtaſteful ſoever they may be for the preſent, they will prove mercies and bleſſings in the iſſue. Upon this account *David* reckons afflictions among the happy bleſſings of his life, *Pſal.* 119. 72. *It is good for me* (ſays he) *that I have been afflicted*; And he gives the reaſon of it in the ſame *Pſalm*, ver. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now I have learnt thy precepts.*

So that though all afflictions are evils in themſelves, yet they are good for us, becauſe they diſcover to us our diſeaſe and tend to our cure. They are a ſenſible argument and conviction to us of the evil and danger of ſin. We are commonly ſuch *fools* as *Solomon* ſpeaks of, who *make a mock of ſin*; And like Children will be playing with the edge of it till it cut and wound us: We are not ſufficiently ſenſible how great an evil it is till we come to feel the diſmal effects and conſequences of it. And therefore to rectify our apprehenſions concerning it God makes us to ſuffer by it. Thus *Elihu* deſcribes to us the happy effect of afflictions upon ſinners, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10. *If they be bound in fetters and held in cords of affliction, then God ſheweth them their work and their tranſgreſſion that they have exceeded. He openeth alſo their ear to diſcipline and commandeth that they return from their iniquity.* God doth but invite and intreat us by his mercies, but his Judgments have a more powerful and commanding voice. *When he holds men in cords of affliction, then he openeth their ear to diſcipline.* In proſperity we are many times incapable of counſel and inſtruction: but when we are under God's correcting hand then are we fit to be ſpoken withal.

Secondly, The Judgments of God are likewiſe *proper for the preventing of far greater evils of the ſame kind*; I mean farther puniſhments. In ſending of temporal Judgments upon ſinners, God uſually proceeds with them by degrees, Firſt he lets fly ſeveral ſingle ſhots at them, and if upon theſe they will take warning and come in they may prevent the broad-ſides and volleys of his wrath.

But the great advantage of all is, that temporal Judgments may prove to us the opportunities of preventing the miſerable and unſpeakable torments of a long Eternity. For all Judgments which are not final, leaving men a ſpace of Repentance, have in them the mercy of a Reprieve, which by a ſerious and timely return to God may be improv'd into a Pardon.

Beſides, that adverſity and afflictions do uſually diſpoſe men, and put them into a fit temper for Repentance; They fix our minds and make us ſerious, and are apt to awaken us to conſideration, and ſuggeſt to us ſuch thoughts and meditations as theſe: If temporal evils be ſo grievous, how inſupportable then will be the extreme and endleſs torments of the next life? If in this day of God's grace and patience we ſometimes meet with ſuch ſeverity, what may we not look for in the day of vengeance? If theſe drops of God's wrath which now and then fall upon ſinners in this world, fill them with ſo much anguiſh and affliction, how deplorably miſerable will thoſe wretches be upon whom the ſtorms of his fury ſhall fall? Who would venture to continue in ſin, when the greateſt miſeries and calamities which we feel in this life are but a ſmall and inconſiderable earneſt of thoſe woful wages which ſinners ſhall receive in the day of recompence?

Thirdly, The Judgments of God are *not only proper to theſe Ends, but in many caſes very neceſſary.* Our condition many times is ſuch as to require this ſevere way of proceeding, becauſe no other courſe that God hath taken, or can take with us, will probably do us good. God does not delight in the miſeries and calamities of his Creatures, but we put him upon theſe extremities, or rather his own goodneſs and wiſdom together do prompt and direct him to theſe harſh and rigorous ways. May be we have brought our ſelves into that dangerous ſtate, and the malignity of our diſtemper is ſuch that it is not to be remov'd without violent Phyſick, and that cannot be adminiſtred to us without making us deadly ſick.

So that the Judgments of God which are many times *abroad in the earth* are nothing elſe but the wiſe Methods which the great Phyſician of the World uſes for the cure of Mankind; They are the Rods of his School and the Diſcipline of his Providence, that *the inhabitants of the world may learn righteouſneſs*; They are a merciful invention of heaven to do men that good which many times nothing elſe will, and to work that bleſſed effect upon us which neither the wiſe counſels and admonitions of God's Word, nor his milder and gentler dealings with us can uſually attain.

Thus we find in the *Parable*, Luke 15. that the Providence of God makes uſe of hunger and extreme neceſſity to bring home the *Prodigal*; and by him our Saviour repreſents to us the temper of moſt ſinners: For till we have ſpent that ſtock of mercies which God hath given us, till we come to be pinch'd with want and are *ready to periſh*, we are not apt to entertain thoughts of *returning to our Father*.

It may be there are ſome ſinners which are more tractable and eaſy to be reduced to goodneſs, that are not ſo headſtrong and obſtinate in their way but that they may be reclaimed by milder and ſofter means: But there are likewiſe a great many ſenſleſs and outragious ſinners, who are madly and furiouſly bent upon their own ruin: Now to treat theſe fairly, with the allurements of kindneſs and the gentle arts of perſuaſion, would be to no purpoſe: The only way that is left of dealing with them, is rigour and ſeverity. When ſinners are thus beſides themſelves, ſomething that looks like cruelty is perhaps the greateſt mercy that can be ſhown to them; nothing ſo proper for ſuch perſons as a dark Room, and a ſpare Diet, and ſevere Uſage; *A rod for the back of fools*, as the *Wiſe-man* ſpeaks.

Thus have I done with the *firſt* thing I propounded to ſpeak to, namely, *The merciful deſign and intention of God in ſending Judgments upon a People*, which is to bring them to Repentance, and by Repentance to prevent their Ruin. I proceed to the

II. *The Reaſon of the continuance of God's Judgments*, becauſe the people were not reclaimed by them; therefore *his anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill*, becauſe *the people turneth not to him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of Hoſts.*

And how can it be expected it ſhould be otherwiſe, when incorrigibleneſs under the Judgments of God is a provocation of ſo high a nature, a ſign of a moſt deprav'd and incorrigible temper, and an argument of the greateſt obſtinacy in evil? Upon this account we find that the Holy Spirit of God in *Scripture* brands *Ahaz* as a ſingular and remarkable ſort of ſinner, (2 *Chron.* 28. 22.) becauſe *in the time of his diſtreſs he ſinned yet more* *againſt the Lord.* The longer *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians* reſiſted the Judgments of God the more ſtill they were harden'd, and the more they were plagu'd: *Lev.* 26. 22. after God had there threatned his people with ſeveral ſore Judgments for their ſins, he tells them, that if they *will not be reform'd by all theſe things* he will *puniſh them ſeven times more,* and after that *ſeven times more for their ſins:* And if in ſuch a caſe the juſt God will puniſh ſeven times more, we may ſafely conclude that ſins after Judgments are ſeven times greater.

So likewiſe *Deut.* 28. after a long and dreadful Catalogue of Curſes there denounc'd againſt the people of *Iſrael* in caſe of their diſobedience, God at laſt threatens them with a foreign *Enemy* that ſhould *diſtreſs them in their gates*; And if they would not be reclaim'd by all this, he tells them, that he hath ſtill more and greater Judgments for them in ſtore, *v.* 58, & 59. *If thou wilt not obſerve to do all the words of this law, that thou mayeſt fear this great and glorious Name,* THE LORD THY GOD, *then the Lord will make thy Plagues wonderful.* If we be of ſo ſtrange and monſtrous a diſpoſition as to grow worſe under Judgments, God will deal with us after an unuſual and prodigious manner, he will make our *plagues wonderful.*

This incorrigible temper the *Prophets* of old every where make the great aggravation of the ſin of *Iſrael,* Iſa. 1. 4, 5. *Ah ſinful nation, a people laden with iniquity*; and after a great many other expreſſions to ſet forth what heinous ſinners they were, he ſums up all in this, That they were ſo far from being reform'd by the ſeveral Judgments of God which had been inflicted upon them, that they were the worſe for correction; *Why ſhould they be ſtricken any more: they will revolt more and more.* So likewiſe, *Hoſ.* 7. 9, 10. *Ephraim,* though brought very low, is repreſented as of the ſame refractory temper, *Strangers have devour'd his ſtrength,* &c. *But they do not return to the Lord, nor ſeek him for all this.* I will mention but one *Text* more (and methinks it bears but too near a reſemblance with our own condition, both in reſpect of the Judgments which have been upon us, and our carriage under them) *Amos* 4. where God upbraids his people ſeveral times with this as the great aggravation of their ſins, That they continued impenitent under all thoſe terrible Judgments of God which had been upon them; *I have ſent among you* (ſays he) *Famine,* and then *Peſtilence,* and then the *Sword,* and laſt of all a terrible *Fire* which had almoſt utterly conſumed them, *verſ.* 11. *I have overthrown ſome of you as I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand pluck'd out of the burning; yet have ye not returned unto me.* And becauſe all theſe Judgments had not been effectual to reclaim them, He tells them that he was reſolved to go on in puniſhing; and therefore he bids them to expect it and prepare themſelves for it, *v.* 12. *Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Iſrael; and becauſe I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Iſrael.* When God hath begun to puniſh a people and they are not amended by it, the honour of his juſtice is concerned to proceed, and not to give over. By every ſin that we commit we offend God, but if he ſmite us, and we ſtand out againſt him, then do we contend with him and ſtrive for maſtery. And when the ſinner is upon theſe ſtubborn and inſolent terms, then *prepare to meet thy God*; A bitter *Sarcaſm,* as if man could be a match for God, and a poor weak creature in any wiſe able to encounter him to whom power belongs. There's a ſevere expreſſion concerning God's dealing with ſuch perverſe and obſtinate ſinners, *Pſal.* 18. 26. *With the froward thou wilt ſhew thy ſelf froward,* or, as the words may more properly and conveniently be rendred, *with the froward, thou wilt wreſtle.* God will not be outbrav'd by the ſins of men, and therefore if we continue impenitent we have all the reaſon in the world to expect that God will go on to puniſh.

But to come nearer to our ſelves and to conſider our own caſe, which is in truth ſo very bad that we may almoſt be afraid to conſider it. The wiſe and good God, like a prudent and indulgent Father, hath uſed all the arts of his Providence towards this Nation to reclaim us. He hath invited us to him by many bleſſings, but we would not come; ſo (to borrow an apt illuſtration from a great Divine of our own) we have forced him to deal with us as *Abſalom* did with *Joab*; he ſent one civil meſſage to him after another, but he would not come; at laſt he ſets on fire his Corn-field to try whether that would bring him: This courſe God hath taken with us, we would not be perſuaded by meſſages of kindneſs (by his many bleſſings and favours) to return to him, and therefore hath he ſent amongſt us the terrible meſſengers of his wrath. Firſt we were engag'd in a *Foreign War*, and though God was pleas'd to give us ſome conſiderable ſucceſs in it, yet it ſeems our provocations were ſo great that he was reſolv'd to puniſh us. He was loth to let us *fall into the hands of men*, and therefore he took the work into his own hand, and puniſh'd us himſelf, by ſending a *Peſtilence* amongſt us, the ſoreſt and moſt deſtructive that hath befallen this Nation for many Ages. But we did not upon this, return to him, and therefore his fierce anger kindled a fearful *Fire* amongſt us, which hath laid the honour of our Nation, one of the greateſt and richeſt Cities in the World in the duſt; and that by ſo ſudden and irreſiſtible, ſo diſmal and amazing a devaſtation, as in all the circumſtances of it is ſcarce to be parallel'd in any Hiſtory.

Biſhop Sanderſon.

I doubt not but moſt of us were mightily affected with this Judgment whilſt it was upon us. So aſtoniſhing a calamity could not but make us open our eyes a little, and awaken us to conſideration; Even the *rich man* in the *Goſpel*, though he had all his life-time been immers'd in ſenſuality, yet could not but *lift up his eyes when he was in flames.*

And ſurely God expects that ſuch Judgments as theſe ſhould not only rouze us a little for the preſent, but that they ſhould have a permanent operation and effect upon us, and work a thorough and laſting reformation amongſt us; but yet I am afraid that this dreadful Fire hath had no other influence upon us but what it uſes to have upon Metals, which are only melted by it for the preſent, but when the Fire is removed they ſuddenly cool and return to their former hardneſs.

One would have thought that the ſenſe of ſuch a calamity as this ſhould have remain'd longer upon us. Methinks God ſeem'd to ſay to us after this Judgment as he did once to *Jeruſalem*, Zeph. 3. 7. *Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive inſtruction*; but we (like them) have been but the more forward to provoke him, (*they roſe early and corrupted their doings*) we have after all this, *harden'd our hearts from his fear and refuſed to return.* And therefore God is now come to one of his laſt Judgments, *Our Enemy diſtreſſeth us in our Gates.* God hath begun to *let us fall into the hands of men*, and by giving our enemies a ſudden and fatal advantage upon us, had ſmitten us with *a Breach great as the Sea.*

Theſe were terrible calamities indeed to come ſo thick and ſo ſwiftly upon us, *like deſolation, and as a Whirlwind.* Such a quick ſucceſſion of Judgments, treading almoſt upon one anothers heels, does but too plainly declare that God is highly incens'd againſt us. For ſurely theſe are not the wounds of a Friend, but the terrible aſſaults of an Enemy. They do not look like the diſpleaſure of a Father, but the ſeverity of a Judge, not like *viſitation*, but like *vengeance.*

And beſides theſe more viſible Judgments upon the Nation, we are by a ſecret curſe of God inſenſibly decayed in our riches and ſtrength. We are, I know not how, ſtrangely impoveriſh'd in the midſt of plenty, and almoſt undone by victories. And which adds to our miſery, few among us ſeem to be ſufficiently ſenſible of it, or to take any notice by what ſilent ſteps and imperceptible degrees (like gray hairs and the infirmities of old age) poverty and weakneſs are ſtealing in upon us: ſo that we may fitly apply to our ſelves what the Prophet ſays of *Ephraim*, *Hoſ.* 7. 9. *Strangers have devoured his ſtrength, and he knoweth it not*; *yea gray hairs are here and there upon him, and yet he knoweth it not.*

And our condition as we are a Church, is not much better. How is this famous *Proteſtant Church* of ours, which was once the *admiration* of her Friends and the envy of her Enemies, ſunk and declin'd in her glory, and reduc'd into a very narrow compaſs? So that ſhe is *left* like *the Daughter of Sion*, (Iſa. 1. 8.) *as a Cottage in a Vineyard, as a Lodge in a Garden of Cucumbers, as a beſieged City:* ſtraitned and hemm'd in on all parts, by the impudence of *Atheiſm*, the inſolencies of *Popery*, and the turbulency of *Faction*; all which do every day viſibly and apace gain ground upon her, and diſtreſs her on every ſide; juſt as the condition of the *Jewiſh* Church is deſcribed before my Text, *The Syrians before, and the Philiſtines behind, both ready to devour Iſrael with open mouth.*

And ſurely it is not for nothing that God hath brought us thus low, that he hath ſent all theſe Judgments upon us, and that he doth ſtill threaten us with more: The reaſon is plain, becauſe we are ſtill impenitent; *The people turned not to him that ſmiteth them.* There hath been almoſt an univerſal degeneracy amongſt us, and there is ſtill, I fear, a general impenitency, *the people turneth not*, &c. Notwithſtanding all thoſe diſmal Calamities which our eyes have ſeen, wickedneſs doth ſtill prevail in the Nation and overflows it like a mighty deluge, ſo as to overſpread all ranks and orders of men: And not only ſo, but is grown impudent and appears *with a whores forehead*; all kind of modeſty ſeems to have forſaken the ſinners of this Age.

And is this Repentance? to live in filthy and abominable luſts, to tear the Name of God by horrid Oaths and Imprecations; to be atheiſtical and prophane, and by an unexampled boldneſs to turn the *Word of God* it ſelf and the graveſt and moſt ſerious matters of Religion into *Raillery?* This is not *to turn to him that ſmiteth us*, but to turn upon him and ſmite him again. And yet ſuch crying and clamorous ſins as theſe are almoſt come to be the garb and faſhion of the Nation, and to be accounted the wit and gallantry of the Age.

And *ſhall not God viſit for theſe things? ſhall not his ſoul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?* Yes, he hath viſited; and 'tis for theſe things that *the wrath of God* hath been ſo manifeſtly *revealed from Heaven* againſt us. For this cauſe *miſery and deſtruction* have been *in our way, and the way of peace have we not known*, becauſe there hath been *no fear of God before our eyes.* Hence it is that *God's anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill, becauſe the people turneth not to him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of Hoſts.*

But do not we *ſeek God?* Do we not every day acknowledge our ſins to him, and pray that he would *have mercy upon us miſerable offenders*, and *grant that we may hereafter live godly, righteous, and ſober lives?* Do not we *ſeek the Lord of Hoſts*, when we continually beg of him to ſave and *deliver us from the hand of our enemies?* Indeed we do thus *ſeek* him, but we ſhould firſt *turn to him*; otherwiſe if we hope our prayers will prevail with God to do us good we do but *truſt in lying words.* If we go on in our ſins our very prayers will *become ſin*, and encreaſe our guilt: For *the prayer of the wicked* (that is, of one that is reſolved to continue ſo) *is an abomination to the Lord.* Can we think it reaſonable for men to addreſs themſelves to God after this manner? *Lord, though we have no mind to turn to thee, yet we pray thee turn away thine anger from us; though we are reſolved not to forſake our ſins, yet we make no doubt but that thy mercy will forgive them; Give peace in our time, O Lord, that we may purſue our luſts ſecurely and without diſturbance: deliver us we pray thee from the hands of our Enemies, that we may ſin againſt thee without fear all the days of our lives.* Would it not be horrible impudence and impiety to put up any ſuch petitions to God? And yet this, I fear, is the moſt genuine interpretation of our prayers and lives compar'd together.

And if this be our caſe, what can we expect? God may give us peace with our Enemies, but then he will find out ſome other way to puniſh us: For if we ſtill perſiſt in our Atheiſm and Prophaneneſs, in our contempt of God and of his holy Worſhip, in our ſcorn and deriſion of Religion, in our abominable luſts and horrid impieties, what can we look for but that God ſhould *be angry with us until he have conſumed us and there be no eſcaping?* Nothing can be a ſadder preſage of our ruin, than not to be reformed by thoſe dreadful Judgments of God which have been upon us. This was that which brought final deſtruction upon the *Egyptians* in the *Red Sea*, that they had held out ſo obſtinately againſt ſo many Judgments, and had been *hardened under ten Plagues.* ~~To be impenitent after ſuch ſevere corrections, is to~~ poyſon our ſelves with that which is intended for our Phyſick, and by a *miraculous* kind of obſtinacy to turn the *Rods* of God into *Serpents.*

And now perhaps ſome will be apt to ſay, That theſe are things fit for men of our *Profeſſion*, becauſe it is our Trade and we live by it. Indeed they are ſo, things very fit to be ſaid, and withal very fit for every one to conſider, who profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian, and who owns the belief of a God, and a Providence, and another World. And if they be ſo, where is the fault? Is it, that there is a peculiar Profeſſion of men whoſe proper work it is to tell men of their faults, and to perſuade them to reform? No, there is no harm in that neither. Is it then that they live by their Profeſſion, and yet would be believed? Yes, there lies the force of the objection. To which I ſhall only at preſent return this anſwer, That men do not argue thus in other caſes, when yet the reaſon ſeems to be the very ſame. In matters that concern their *Bodies* and *Eſtates*, the *Phyſician* and the *Lawyer* are believed, though it is verily thought that they live by their Profeſſions as well as we; why then ſhould men deal ſo partially and unequally only with their *Souls?* were we not moved by better principles, and ſwayed by the arguments and conſiderations of another world, we might, for ought we know, with every whit as much advantage to our ſelves ſuffer men to be quiet and to ſleep on ſecurely in their ſins; If we did not believe our ſelves in theſe matters, what ſhould hinder but that we might with as much gravity and confidence cry Peace, Peace, when there is no Peace; and flatter men with as much art and with as good a grace, as any of thoſe can do who *live delicately and wear ſoft cloathing?*

But *we believe* the threatnings of God, and *therefore do we ſpeak: We know the terror* of the Lord, and therefore we endeavour to *perſuade men.* And Oh! that we could perſuade them to *break off their ſins by righteouſneſs*, and to *turn every one from the evil of his way, and from the violence that is in his hands:* And then *who can tell but God may turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger that we periſh not.*

The good God make us all wiſe to know in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes; and grant that we may all turn to him that hath ſmitten us, by Repentance and real Reformation of our lives; that God may be pleaſed to turn away his Anger from us, and to ſtretch out his hand for our Deliverance; which we humbly beg of him for the ſake of Chriſt. To whom with the Father, &c.

SERMON

SERMON X.

Of the Deceitfulneſs and Danger of Sin.

HEB. III. 13.

Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.

AMong the many conſiderations which the Word of God and our own Reaſon offer to us to diſcourage us from ſin this is none of the leaſt conſiderable, that he that once engages in a vicious courſe is in danger to proceed in it, being inſenſibly trained on from one degree of wickedneſs to another; ſo that the farther he advanceth, his retreat grows more difficult, becauſe he is ſtill puſhed on with a greater violence. All error, as well of practice as of judgment is endleſs; and when a man is once out of the way, the farther he ſhall go on the harder he will find it to return into the right way. Therefore there is great reaſon why men ſhould be ſo often cautioned againſt the beginnings of ſin; or if they have been ſo unhappy as to be engaged in a bad courſe, why they ſhould be warned to break it off preſently and without delay, leſt by degrees they be hardned in their wickedneſs, till their caſe grow deſperate and paſt remedy. And to this purpoſe is the *Apoſtle*'s advice here in the *Text*, *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.*

From which words I ſhall

1. Endeavour to repreſent to you the growing danger of ſin, and by what ſteps and degrees bad habits do inſenſibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil courſe.

2. I ſhall from this conſideration take occaſion to ſhew what great reaſon and need there is to warn men of this danger, and to endeavour to reſcue them out of it. And then

3. I ſhall apply my ſelf to the duty here in the Text, of *exhorting* men with all earneſtneſs and importunity to reſiſt the beginnings of ſin; or if they be already entred upon a wicked courſe, to make haſte out of this dangerous ſtate; *leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.*

I. *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent to you the growing danger of ſin, and by what ſteps and degrees bad habits do inſenſibly gain upon men and harden them in an evil courſe. All the actions of men which are not natural, but proceed from deliberation and choice have ſomething of difficulty in them when we begin to practice them, becauſe at firſt we are rude and unexerciſed in that way: but after we have practiſed them awhile they become more eaſy: and when they are eaſy, we begin to take pleaſure in them: and when they pleaſe us we do them frequently, and think we cannot repeat them too often; and by frequency of Acts a thing grows into a habit: and a confirmed habit is a ſecond kind of nature: and ſo far as any thing is natural ſo far it is neceſſary, and we can hardly do otherwiſe; nay, we do it many times when we do not think of it. For by virtue of a habit a man's mind or body becomes pliable and inclined to ſuch kind of actions as it is accuſtomed to, and does as it were ſtand bent and charged ſuch a way; ſo that being touched and awakened by the leaſt occaſion, it breaks forth into ſuch or ſuch actions. And this is the natural progreſs of all habits indifferently conſidered, whether they be good or bad.

But vicious habits have a greater advantage, and are of a quicker growth. For the corrupt nature of man is a rank ſoil to which vice takes eaſily, and wherein it thrives apace. The mind of man hath need to be prepared for piety and virtue; it muſt be cultivated to that end, and ordered with great care and pains: But vices are weeds that grow wild and ſpring up of themſelves. They are in ſome ſort natural to the Soil, and therefore they need not to be planted and watered, 'tis ſufficient if they be neglected and let alone. So that vice having this advantage from our nature, it is no wonder if occaſion and temptation eaſily draw it forth.

But that we may take a more diſtinct account of the progreſs of ſin and by what ſteps vice gains upon men, I ſhall mark out to you ſome of the chief and more obſervable gradations of it.

1. Men begin with leſſer ſins. No man is perfectly wicked on the ſudden. *Sunt quædam vitiorum elementa*; *there are certain rudiments of vice*, in which men are firſt entred, and then they proceed by degrees to greater and fouler crimes. For ſin hath its infancy and tender age, and its ſeveral ſtates of growth. Men are not ſo totally degenerate but at firſt they are aſhamed when they venture upon a known ſin, though it be but ſmall in compariſon. Hence it is that at firſt men are very ſolicitous to palliate and hide their faults by excuſes, but after they have frequently committed them, and they grow too viſible to be concealed, then they will attempt to defend and maintain them; and from thence they come by degrees to take pleaſure in them, and in thoſe that do the ſame things. *Juven.*

2. After men have been ſome time initiated in theſe leſſer ſins, by the commiſſion of theſe they are prepared and diſpoſed for greater; ſuch as lay waſte the conſcience, and offer more violence to the light and reaſon of their minds. By degrees a ſinner may grow to be ſo hardy as to attempt thoſe crimes which at firſt he could not have had the thought of committing without horror. Like *Hazael*, who when he was told by the Prophet *Eliſha* what barbarous cruelties he ſhould one day be guilty of towards the People of *Iſrael* when he ſhould come to be King of *Syria*, he abominated the very thought and mention of them; *Is thy ſervant a dog that he ſhould do this great thing?* and yet for all this we know he did it afterwards. 'Tis true indeed when a ſinner is firſt tempted to the commiſſion of a more groſs and notorious ſin, his conſcience is apt to boggle and ſtart at it, he doth it with great difficulty and regret; the terrors of his own mind and the fears of damnation are very troubleſome to him; But this trouble wears off by degrees, and that which was at firſt difficult does by frequent practice and long cuſtom become tolerable.

3. When a man hath proceeded thus far he begins to put off ſhame, one of the greateſt reſtraints from ſin which God hath laid upon humane nature. And when this curb once falls off, there is then but little left to reſtrain and hold us in. At firſt ſetting out upon a vicious courſe men are a little nice and delicate, like young Travellers, who at firſt are offended at every ſpeck of

dirt that lights upon them; but after they have been accuſtomed to it, and have travelled a good while in foul ways, it ceaſeth to be troubleſome to them to be daſh'd and beſpatter'd.

4. After this, it is poſſible, men may come to approve their vices. For if mens Judgments do not command their wills and reſtrain their luſts, it is great odds in proceſs of time the vicious inclinations of their Wills will put a falſe byaſs upon their Judgments; And then it is no wonder if men come to boaſt of their ſins and to glory in their vices, when they are half perſuaded that they are generous and commendable qualities. Thus much is certain in experience, that ſome men have gotten ſo perfect a habit of ſome ſins as not to know and take notice many times when they commit them. As in the caſe of ſwearing, which ſome men have ſo accuſtomed themſelves to that without any conſideration they do of courſe put an oath or two into every ſentence that comes from them. And it hath been obſerved of ſome perſons that they have told an untruth ſo often, and averr'd it with ſo much confidence, till at laſt, forgetting that it was a lye at firſt, they themſelves have in proceſs of time believed it to be true.

5. From this pitch of wickedneſs men commonly proceed to draw in others and to make Proſelytes to their vices. Now this ſignifies not only a great approbation of ſin but even a fondneſs for it, when men are not content to ſin upon their own ſingle accounts, but they muſt turn zealous agents and factors for the Devil; become *teachers* of ſin and *miniſters of unrighteouſneſs*, and are factiouſly concerned to propagate together with their Atheiſtical principles their lewd practices, and to draw Followers and Diſciples after them.

And when they are arrived to this height it is natural for them to hate reproof, and to reſiſt the means of their recovery; to quarrel againſt all the remedies that ſhall be offered to them, and to count thoſe their greateſt enemies who have ſo much courage and kindneſs as to deal plainly with them, and to tell them the truth. And then all the wiſe counſels of God's Word, and the moſt gentle and prudent admonitions in the world, when they are tendered to ſuch perſons, ſerve only to provoke their ſcorn or their paſſion. And ſurely that man is in a ſad caſe that is ſo diſpoſed, that in all probability he will turn the moſt effectual means of his amendment into the occaſion of new and greater ſins.

But that which renders the condition of ſuch perſons much more ſad and deplorable is, that all this while God is withdrawing his grace from them. For every degree of ſin cauſeth the Holy Spirit of God with all his bleſſed motions and aſſiſtances to retire farther from them: And not only ſo, but the Devil (that evil *Spirit* which the *Scripture* tells us, *works effectually in the children of diſobedience*) does according as men improve in wickedneſs get a greater and a more eſtabliſh'd dominion over them. For as they who are reclaimed from an evil courſe are ſaid in Scripture to be *reſcued out of the ſnare of the Devil*, and to be *turned from the power of Satan unto God*; ſo on the other hand, the farther men advance in the ways of ſin ſo much the farther they depart from God, from under the influence of his grace, and the care of his protection and providence; and they give the Devil (who is not apt to neglect his advantages upon them) greater opportunities every day to gain the firmer poſſeſſion of them.

And thus by paſſing from one degree of ſin to another, the ſinner becomes hardned in his wickedneſs and does inſenſibly ſlide into that in which without a miraculous grace of God he is like for ever to continue. For the mind of man after it hath been long accuſtomed to evil, and is once grown old in vice, is almoſt as hard to be rectified as it is to recover a body bowed down with age to its firſt ſtraightneſs. The *Scripture* ſpeaks of ſome that *commit ſin with greedineſs*, and *that drink up iniquity as the Oxe drinketh up water*, with a mighty appetite and thirſt as if they were not able to refrain from it. And to expreſs to us the miſerable condition of ſuch perſons it repreſenteth them as perfect ſlaves to their vices, that have *ſold* themſelves to do wickedneſs, and *are led captive by Satan at his pleaſure*. And when men have brought themſelves to this paſs, they are almoſt under a fatal neceſſity of ſinning on. I do not believe that God hath abſolutely predeſtinated any man to ruin, but by a long courſe of wilful ſins men may in a ſort predeſtinate themſelves to it, and chuſe wickedneſs ſo long till it almoſt becomes neceſſary, and till they have brought themſelves under all imaginable diſadvantages of contributing any thing towards their own recovery; being bound in the chains of their own wickedneſs and held in the cords of their ſins: Nay, like *Sampſon*, not only bound by thoſe luſts which they have embraced, but likewiſe robbed of all their ſtrength whereby they ſhould break looſe from thoſe bonds. God grant that none of us may ever have the woful experience of it: But I am horribly afraid it is too true, that a ſinner may arrive to that confirmed ſtate of impiety as almoſt totally to loſe his liberty to do better: He may attain to that perfection in vice, as to continue to be a bad man upon the ſame account that the *Hiſtorian* extravagantly ſays *Cato* was virtuous, *Quia aliter eſſe non potuit*; *becauſe he could not be otherwiſe*. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his ſpots?* It is the *Scripture*-compariſon, to ſet forth to us how hard a thing it is for a man to be brought to goodneſs that hath been long accuſtomed to do evil. He that is thus deeply engaged and entangled in a bad courſe will ſcarce ever have the heart and reſolution to break looſe from it, unleſs he be forced violently out of it by ſome ſevere affliction, by a ſharp ſickneſs, or by a terrible calamity, or by the preſent apprehenſions of death and the terrors of a future Judgment. Nor will theſe be effectual neither to change ſuch a perſon, without an extraordinary degree of God's grace; which conſidering the greatneſs and the continuance of his provocations, he hath very little reaſon to expect or hope God ſhould ever beſtow upon him. Wretched man! that haſt brought thy ſelf into this miſerable ſtate, out of which there is but juſt a poſſibility left of thy being reſcued; that haſt neglected thy diſeaſe ſo long till it is almoſt too late to apply remedies; that haſt provoked God ſo far and ſinned to ſuch a prodigious height, that thou haſt reaſon almoſt to deſpair both of his grace and aſſiſtance for thy repentance, and of his mercy for thy pardon. I ſpeak not this to diſcourage even the greateſt of ſinners from repentance. Though their caſe be extremely difficult, yet it is not quite deſperate. *For thoſe things which ſeem impoſſible with men, are poſſible with God.* But I ſpeak it on purpoſe to ſtop ſinners in their courſe and to diſcourage men from going on in ſin till they be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of it, and have brought themſelves by inſenſible degrees into that dangerous and difficult ſtate which I have all this while been repreſenting to you. I come now to the

Vel. Paterc.

II. *Second* thing I propounded, which was from this conſideration to ſhew what great reaſon and need there is to warn men of this danger, and to endeavour to reſcue them out of it. The *Apoſtle* directs this precept to all Chriſtians, *Exhort one another daily, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* That is, leſt you be hardned by degrees and finally ruined. And ſurely every man is concerned to do what in him lies to reſcue his brother from ſo imminent a danger. It is every ones place and duty to endeavour to ſave thoſe whom he ſees ready to periſh, much more does it concern thoſe who are peculiarly ſet apart for this work, I mean the Miniſters of God's holy Word, whoſe proper office and buſineſs it is to *exhort* and *warn every man day and night*, who are *ſet as watchmen to the houſe of Iſrael*, and *whoſe blood* in caſe any of them miſcarry through our neglect *ſhall be required at our hands*. So that if we believe the threatnings of God which we declare to others, if we have any apprehenſion of the dreadful miſery of another world, if we have any ſenſe of our own duty and ſafety, if we have any pity for periſhing Souls, we cannot but be very importunate with ſinners to look about them, and to conſider their danger, and to bethink themſelves ſeriouſly of the miſerable event and iſſue of a wicked life: We cannot but be earneſt with them to *break off their ſins, and to give glory to God by repentance, before darkneſs come and their feet ſtumble upon the dark mountains*. When we are convinced more fully than we can deſire, that *miſery and deſtruction are in their ways*, when we plainly ſee the *evil day* haſting towards them apace, and *deſtruction coming upon them like a Whirlwind*; heaven above threatning them, and *hell beneath moving her ſelf to meet them at their coming*, can we poſſibly do leſs than to warn ſuch perſons *to flee from the wrath which is to come*, and out of a ſad apprehenſion of the danger that hangs over them, to caution them againſt it, and endeavour with all our might to reſcue them from the miſery which is ready to ſwallow them up? Indeed one would be apt to think it a very vain thing to diſſuade men from being miſerable, to uſe great vehemency of argument to hinder a man from leaping into a pit, or from running into the fire; to take great pains to argue a ſick man into a deſire of health, and to make a priſoner contented to have his ſhackles knock'd off, and to be ſet at liberty: one would think all this were perfectly needleſs: But yet we ſee in experience ſin is a thing of ſo ſtupifying a nature as to make men inſenſible of their danger, although it be ſo near, and ſo terrible. It is not ſo with men in other caſes: When we labour of any bodily diſtemper, it is much to find a man that is patient of his diſeaſe; but when our ſouls are mortally ſick, that we ſhould be contented with our condition, and fond of our diſeaſe, that we ſhould fight with our Phyſician, and ſpurn at our remedy; this ſurely is the height of diſtraction, for men to be thus abſolutely bent upon their own ruin, and to reſolve to make away themſelves for ever. And we who are the Meſſengers of God to Men muſt be born of the rocks, and have hearts *harder than the nether milſtone*, if we can patiently look on and endure to ſee men periſh without uſing our utmoſt endeavour to ſave them. Therefore I ſhall in the

III. *Third* and *laſt* place apply my ſelf to this work of *Exhortation*, the duty commanded here in the Text. And here I ſhall addreſs my ſelf to *two* ſorts of perſons:

1. To perſuade thoſe who are yet innocent of great crimes to reſiſt the beginnings of ſin, leſt it gain upon them by degrees.
2. To preſs and urge thoſe that are already entred upon a wicked courſe, that they would make haſte out of this dangerous ſtate; *leſt* at laſt *they be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*.

1. To perſuade thoſe who are yet in ſome meaſure innocent, to reſiſt the beginnings of ſin, leſt it gain upon them by degrees. Vice may eaſily be diſcouraged at firſt. 'Tis like a ſlight diſeaſe, which is eaſy to be cured, but

dangerous to be neglected. The firſt approaches of ſin and temptation are uſually very modeſt, but if they be not diſcountenanced they will ſoon grow upon us and make bolder attempts. Every inclination to ſin, every compliance with temptation is a going down the hill: While we keep our ſtanding we may command our ſelves, but if we once put our ſelves into violent motion downward we cannot ſtop when we pleaſe.

Omne in præcipiti vitium ſtetit ———

All Vice ſtands upon a Precipice, and to engage in any ſinful courſe is to run down the hill. And if we once let looſe the propenſions of our nature we cannot gather in the reins and govern them as we pleaſe: If we give way to *preſumptuous ſins* they will quickly get *dominion over us*. It is much eaſier not to begin a bad courſe than to put a ſtop to our ſelves after we have begun it. Seneca. *Stulta res eſt nequitiæ modus*, 'Tis a fond thing for a man to think to ſet bounds to himſelf in any thing that is bad, to reſolve to ſin in number, weight and meaſure, with great temperance and diſcretion, and government of himſelf: that he will commit this ſin and then give over, entertain but this one temptation, and after that he will ſhut the door and admit of no more. Our corrupt hearts when they are once in motion, they are like the raging Sea, to which we can ſet no bounds, nor ſay to it, *Hitherto thou ſhalt go and no further*. Sin is very cunning and deceitful, and does ſtrangely gain upon men when they once give way to it. It is of a very bewitching nature, and hath ſtrange arts of addreſs and inſinuation. The giving the way to a ſmall ſin does marvellouſly prepare and diſpoſe a man for a greater. By giving way to one little vice after another the ſtrongeſt reſolution may be broken. For though it be not to be ſnapt in ſunder at once, yet by this means it is untwiſted by degrees, and then 'tis eaſy to break it one thread after another. 'Tis ſcarce imaginable of what force one ſinful action is to produce more: For ſin is very teeming and fruitful; and tho there be no *bleſſing* annex'd to it, yet it does ſtrangely *increaſe and multiply*. As there is a connection of one virtue with another, ſo vices are link'd together, and one ſin draws many after it. When the Devil tempts a man to commit any wickedneſs he does as it were lay a long train of ſins, and if the firſt temptation take, they give fire to one another. Let us then reſiſt the beginnings of ſin, becauſe then we have moſt power, and ſin hath leaſt. This is the *firſt*.

2. To perſuade thoſe who are already engaged in a wicked courſe, to make haſte out of this dangerous ſtate. And there is no other way to get out of it but by repentance, that is, by a real change and reformation of our lives; for herein the nature of true repentance does conſiſt. And without this all the devices which men uſe to get rid of the guilt of their ſins are vain and to no purpoſe. 'Tis not to be done by a formal confeſſion and abſolution, nor by a long pilgrimage, nor by one of thoſe little Tickets from *Rome* which they call *Indulgences*. A wiſe man would much ſooner perſuade himſelf that God will not at all puniſh the ſins of men, than that he would forgive them ſo eaſily, and receive great offenders to favour upon ſuch ſlight terms. Let us not deceive our ſelves, there is one plain way to heaven, by ſincere repentance and a holy life, and there is no getting thither by tricks. And without this change of our lives all our ſorrow and faſting and humiliation for ſin, which at this ſeaſon we make profeſſion of, will ſignify nothing. There is an excellent paſſage of the Son of *Sirach* to this purpoſe, Ecclus. 34. 25, 26. *He that waſheth himſelf after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again what availeth his waſhing? So is it with a man that faſteth*

for his ſins, and goeth again and doth the ſame things, who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him? There is this plain difference between trouble for ſin and repentance; ſorrow only reſpects ſins paſt, but repentance is chiefly preventive of ſins for the future: And God therefore requires that we ſhould be troubled for our ſins, that we may reſolve to leave them.

And to oblige us to a vigorous and ſpeedy reſolution in this matter, let us conſider that we have engaged too far already in a bad courſe; and that every day our retreat will grow more dangerous and difficult; that by our delays we make work for a ſadder and longer repentance than that which we do now ſo ſtudiouſly decline: Let us conſider likewiſe, that our life is concerned in the caſe; that *except we repent and turn, we ſhall dye:* And that the evil day may overtake us while we are deliberating whether we ſhould avoid it or not; that vice is ſo far from being mortified by age, that by every days continuance in it we increaſe the power of it; and ſo much ſtrength as we add to our diſeaſe we certainly take from our ſelves; And this is a double weakning of us, when we do not only loſe our own ſtrength, but the enemy gets it and employs it againſt us. The deceitfulneſs of ſin appears in nothing more than in keeping men off from this neceſſary work, and perſuading them to hazard all upon the unreaſonable hopes of the mercy of God, and the uncertain reſolution of a future repentance. I do not think there are any here but do either believe, or at leaſt are vehemently afraid that there is another life after this; and that a wicked life, without repentance muſt unavoidably make them miſerable in another world; and that to caſt off all to a death-bed repentance, puts things upon a mighty hazard. And they have a great deal of reaſon to think ſo: For alas, how unfit are moſt men at ſuch a time for ſo great and ſerious a work as repentance is, when they are unfit for the ſmalleſt matters: And how hard is it for any man then to be aſſured of the truth and reality of his repentance, when there is no ſufficient opportunity to make trial of the ſincerity of it. I deny not the poſſibility of the thing; but it is much to be feared that the repentance of a dying ſinner is uſually but like the ſorrow of a malefactor, when he is ready to be turned off; he is not troubled that he hath offended the Law, but he is troubled that he muſt dye. For when death is ready to ſeize upon the ſinner, and he feels himſelf dropping into deſtruction, no wonder if then the man's ſtomach come down, and he be contented to be ſaved; and ſeeing he muſt ſtay no longer in this world, be deſirous to go to Heaven rather than Hell; and in order to that, be ready to give ſome teſtimonies of his repentance: no wonder if when the rack is before him this extort confeſſion from him, and if in hopes of a pardon he make many large promiſes of amendment, and freely declare his reſolution of a new and better life. But then it is the hardeſt thing in the world to judge whether any thing of all this that is done under ſo great a fear and force be real. For a ſick man as he hath loſt an appetite to the moſt pleaſant meats and drinks, ſo likewiſe his ſinful pleaſures and fleſhly luſts are at the ſame time nauſeous to him, and for the very ſame reaſon: For ſickneſs having altered the temper of his body, he hath not at that time any guſt or reliſh for theſe things. And now he is reſolved againſt ſin, juſt as a man that hath no ſtomach is reſolved againſt meat. But if the fit were over, and death would but raiſe his ſiege and remove his quarters a little farther from him, it is to be feared that his former appetite would ſoon return to him, and that he would ſin with the ſame eagerneſs he did before. Beſides, how can we expect that God ſhould accept of his repentance at ſuch a time, when we are conſcious to our ſelves that we did reſolve to put off our repentance till we could ſin no longer? Can we think it fit for any man to ſay thus to God in a dying hour; “Lord, now the world leaves me, I come to thee. I pray thee give me eternal life, who could never afford to give thee one good day of my life: Grant that I may live with thee and enjoy thee for ever, who could never endure to think upon thee. I muſt confeſs that I could never be perſuaded to leave my ſins out of love to thee, but now I repent of them for fear of thee: I am conſcious to my ſelf that I would never do any thing for thy ſake, but yet I hope thy goodneſs is ſuch that thou wilt forgive all the ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of my life, and accept of this forced ſubmiſſion which I now make to thee. I pray thee do not at laſt fruſtrate and diſappoint me in this deſign which I have laid, of ſinning while I live and getting to Heaven when I dye. Surely no man can think it fit to ſay thus to God; and yet I am afraid this is the true interpretation of many a man's repentance who hath deferr'd it till he comes to dye. I do not ſpeak this to diſcourage repentance, even at that time. It is always the beſt thing we can do. But I would by all means diſcourage men from putting off ſo neceſſary a work till then. 'Tis true indeed when 'tis come to this and a ſinner finds himſelf going out of the world, if he have been ſo fooliſh and ſo cruel to himſelf as to put things upon this laſt hazard, repentance is now the only thing that is left for him to do; this is his laſt remedy and the only refuge he has to fly to: And this is that which the Miniſter in this caſe ought by all means to put the man upon, and earneſtly to perſuade him to. But when we ſpeak to men in other circumſtances, that are well and in health, we dare not for all the world encourage them to venture their ſouls upon ſuch an uncertainty. For to ſpeak the beſt of it, it is a very dangerous remedy, eſpecially when men have deſignedly contriv'd to rob God of the ſervice of their beſt days, and to put him off with a few unprofitable ſighs and tears at the hour of death. I deſire to have as large apprehenſions of the mercy of God as any man, but withal, I am very ſure that he is the hardeſt to be impoſed upon of any one in the world. And no man that hath any worthy apprehenſions of the Deity can imagine him to be ſo eaſy, as to forgive men upon the leaſt word and intimation of their minds, and to have ſuch a fondneſs for offenders as would reflect upon the prudence of any Magiſtrate and Governor upon Earth. God grant that I may ſincerely endeavour to live a holy and virtuous life, and may have the comfort of that when I come to dye: And that I may never be ſo unwiſe as to venture all my hopes of a bleſſed eternity upon a death-bed repentance.

I will conclude all with thoſe excellent ſayings of the Son of *Syrach* (Ecclus. 5. 6, 7. 16. 11, 12. 18. 21, 22) *Say not, God's mercy is great, and he will be pacified for the multitude of my ſins. For mercy and wrath is with him ; he is mighty to forgive, and to pour out diſpleaſure : And as his mercy is great, ſo are his corrections alſo. Therefore make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day : For ſuddenly ſhall the wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy ſecurity thou ſhalt be deſtroyed. Humble thy ſelf before thou be ſick, and in the time of ſins ſhew repentance. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vows in due time, and defer not till death to be juſtified.*

SERMON XI.

The Hazard of being Saved in the Church of *Rome*.

1 COR. III. 15.

But he himſelf ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire.

THE Context is thus. *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wiſe Maſter-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon: but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, Jeſus Chriſt. Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, ſilver, precious ſtones, wood, hay, ſtubble, every man's work ſhall be made manifeſt, for the day ſhall declare it; becauſe it ſhall be revealed by fire, and the fire ſhall try every man's work of what ſort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he ſhall receive a reward. If any man's work ſhall be burnt, he ſhall ſuffer loſs; but he himſelf ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire.*

In theſe words the Apoſtle ſpeaks of a ſort of perſons, who held indeed the foundation of *Chriſtianity*, but built upon it ſuch *doctrines* or *practices* as would not bear the *trial*; which he expreſſes to us by *wood*, *hay*, and *ſtubble*, which are not *proof* againſt the *Fire*. Such a perſon, the Apoſtle tells us, hath brought himſelf into a very dangerous ſtate, though he would not deny the poſſibility of his ſalvation; *He himſelf ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire.*

That by *fire* here is not meant the fire of *Purgatory*, as ſome pretend (who would be glad of any ſhadow of a Text of Scripture to countenance their own dreams) I ſhall neither trouble you nor my ſelf to manifeſt; ſince the *particle* of ſimilitude [ὡς] plainly ſhews that the Apoſtle did not intend an eſcape out of the fire *literally*, but like to that which men make out of a Houſe or Town that is on fire. Eſpecially ſince very learned perſons of the Church of *Rome* do acknowledge that *Purgatory* cannot be concluded from this *Text*, nay all that *Eſtius* contends for from this *place* is, that it cannot be concluded from hence that there is no *Purgatory*; which we never pretended, but only that this Text doth not prove it.

It is very well known that this is a Proverbial phraſe uſed not only in Scripture, but in prophane Authors to ſignify *a narrow eſcape out of a great danger*. He ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire, διὰ πυρὸς, *out of the fire*. Juſt as δι᾽ ὕδατος is uſed 1 *Pet*. 3. 20. where the Apoſtle ſpeaking of the eight perſons of *Noah*'s family who eſcap'd the flood, διεσώθησαν δι᾽ ὕδατος, they eſcaped *out of the water*. So here this phraſe is to be rendred in the Text, *he himſelf ſhall eſcape, yet ſo as out of the fire*. The like expreſſion you have, *Amos* 4. 11. *I have pluck'd them as a firebrand out of the fire*. And *Jude* 23. *Others ſave with fear, plucking them out of the fire*. All which expreſſions ſignify the greatneſs of the danger and the difficulty of eſcaping it; *as one who when his houſe at midnight is ſet on fire, and being ſuddenly wak'd leaps out of his bed, and runs naked out of the doors, taking nothing that is within along with him,*

but employing his whole care to ſave his body from the flames, as S. *Chryſoſtom*
* *Tully.* upon another occaſion expreſſeth it. And ſo the *Roman* Orator* (who it is likely did not think of *Purgatory*) uſeth this phraſe; *Quo ex judicio, velut ex incendio, nudus effugit*; From which Judgment or Sentence he eſcaped
† *Ariſtides.* naked, as it were out of a burning. And one of the *Greek* Orators † tells us, That *to ſave a man out of the fire, was a common proverbial ſpeech.*

From the words thus explained, the Obſervation that naturally ariſeth is this, *That men may hold all the Fundamentals of Chriſtian Religion, and yet may ſuperadd other things whereby they may greatly endanger their ſalvation.* What thoſe things were which ſome among the *Corinthians* built upon the foundation of Chriſtianity, whereby they endanger'd their Salvation, we may probably conjecture by what the Apoſtle reproves in this Epiſtle, as the tolerating of *inceſtuous marriages*, communicating in *Idol Feaſts*, &c. And eſpecially by the doctrine of the falſe Apoſtles, who at that time did ſo much diſturb the peace of moſt Chriſtian Churches, and who are ſo often and ſo ſeverely reflected upon in this Epiſtle. And what their *Doctrine* was, we have an account, *Acts* 15. *viz.* that they impoſed upon the *Gentile* Chriſtians *Circumciſion, and the obſervation of the Jewiſh Law,* teaching that *unleſs they were circumciſed, and kept the Law of Moſes, they could not be ſaved.* So that they did not only build theſe doctrines upon *Chriſtianity,* but they made them equal with the *Foundation,* ſaying, that *unleſs men believed and practiſed ſuch things they could not be ſaved.*

In ſpeaking to this *Obſervation,* I ſhall reduce my diſcourſe to theſe two Heads.

1. I ſhall preſent to you ſome *Doctrines* and *Practices* which have been built upon the *Foundation of Chriſtianity,* to the great hazard and danger of mens *ſalvation.* And to be plain, I mean particularly the Church of *Rome.*

2. I ſhall enquire, whether our granting a *poſſibility* of ſalvation (tho with great hazard) to thoſe in the communion of the *Roman* Church, and their denying it to us, be a reaſonable argument and encouragement to any man to betake himſelf to that Church.

And there is the more reaſon to conſider theſe things, when ſo many *ſeducing Spirits* are ſo active and buſy to pervert men from the *truth*; and when we ſee every day ſo many men and their *Religion* ſo eaſily parted. For this reaſon theſe two Conſiderations ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

I. *Firſt,* We will conſider ſome *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* hath built upon the *foundation* of *Chriſtianity,* to the great hazard and danger of mens *ſalvation.* It is not denied by the moſt judicious *Proteſtants,* but that the Church of *Rome* do hold all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith which are neceſſary to ſalvation. But that which we charge upon them, as a juſt ground of our ſeparation from them, is *the impoſing of new Doctrines and Practices upon Chriſtians as neceſſary to ſalvation,* which were never taught by our Saviour, or his Apoſtles; and which are either directly contrary to the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, or too apparently deſtructive of a good life. And I begin,

1. With their *Doctrines.* And becauſe I have no mind to aggravate leſſer matters, I will ſingle out four or five points of Doctrine, which they have added to the Chriſtian Religion, and which were neither taught by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, nor own'd in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity. And the

Firſt which I ſhall mention, and which being once admitted makes way for as many errors as they pleaſe to bring in, is *their Doctrine of Infallibility.*

And this they are very ſtiff and peremptory in, tho they are not agreed among themſelves where this *Infallibility* is ſeated; whether in the *Pope alone*, or a *Council alone*, or in *both together*, or in the *diffuſive body of Chriſtians*. But they are ſure they have it, though they know not where it is.

And is this no prejudice againſt it? Can any man think that this *privilege* was at firſt conferred upon the Church of *Rome*, and that Chriſtians in all Ages did believe it, and had conſtant recourſe to it for determining their differences, and yet that that very Church which hath enjoyed and uſed it ſo long ſhould now be at a loſs where to find it? Nothing could have fallen out more unluckily, than that there ſhould be ſuch differences among them about that which they pretend to be the only means of ending all differences.

There is not the leaſt intimation in Scripture of this *Privilege* conferr'd upon the *Roman* Church, nor do the Apoſtles, in all their Epiſtles, ever ſo much as give the leaſt direction to Chriſtians to appeal to the Biſhop of *Rome* for a determination of the many differences which even in thoſe times happen'd among them. And it is ſtrange they ſhould be ſo ſilent in this matter, when there were ſo many *occaſions* to ſpeak of it, if our Saviour had plainly appointed ſuch an *Infallible Judge* of controverſies for this very end to decide the differences that ſhould happen among Chriſtians. It is ſtrange that the *Ancient Fathers* in their diſputes with Hereticks ſhould never appeal to this *Judge*; nay, it is ſtrange they ſhould not conſtantly do it in all caſes; it being ſo ſhort and expedite a way for the ending of controverſies. And this very conſideration to a wiſe man is inſtead of a thouſand arguments to ſatisfy him that in thoſe times no ſuch thing was believed in the world.

Now, this *Doctrine of Infallibility*, if it be not true, is of ſo much the more pernicious conſequence to Chriſtianity, becauſe the conceit of it does confirm them that think they have it in all their other errors; and gives them a pretence of aſſuming an authority to themſelves to impoſe their own fancies and miſtakes upon the whole Chriſtian world.

2. Their *Doctrine* about *Repentance*, which conſiſts in confeſſing their ſins to the Prieſt; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of *contrition*, does upon *abſolution* received from the Prieſt put them into a ſtate of *ſalvation*, tho they have lived the moſt lewd and debauch'd lives that can be imagin'd; than which nothing can be more plainly deſtructive of a good life. For if this be true, all the hazard that the moſt wicked man runs of his ſalvation is only the danger of ſo *ſudden a death* as gives him no ſpace for confeſſion and abſolution. A caſe that happens ſo rarely, that any man that is ſtrongly addicted to his luſts will be content to venture his ſalvation upon this hazard; and all the arguments to a good life will be very inſignificant to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when remiſſion of ſins may be had upon ſuch cheap terms.

3. *The Doctrine of Purgatory*; By which they mean an eſtate of temporary puniſhments after this life, from which men may be releaſed and tranſlated into Heaven by the prayers of the living, and the Sacrifice of the *Maſs*. That this Doctrine was not known in the Primitive Church, nor can be proved from Scripture, we have the free acknowledgment of as learned and eminent men as any of that Church; which is to acknowledge that it is a ſuperſtructure upon the Chriſtian Religion. And tho in one ſenſe it be indeed a building of *gold* and *ſilver* upon the foundation of Chriſtianity, conſidering the vaſt revenues which this Doctrine (and that of *Indulgences*, which depends upon it) brings into that Church; yet I doubt not, but in the Apoſtles ſenſe, it will be found to be *hay* and *ſtubble*. But how groundleſs ſoever it be, it is too gainful a Doctrine to be eaſily parted withal.

4. *The Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation.* A hard *word*, but I would to God that were the worſt of it; the *thing* is much more difficult. I have taken ſome pains to conſider other Religions that have been in the world, and I muſt freely declare, that I never yet in any of them met with any Article or Propoſition, impoſed upon the belief of men, half ſo unreaſonable and hard to be believed as this is: And yet this in the *Romiſh* Church is eſteemed one of the moſt principal Articles of the Chriſtian Faith; tho there is no more certain foundation for it in Scripture, than for our Saviour's being ſubſtantially changed into all thoſe things which are ſaid of him, as that he is a *rock*, a *vine*, a *door*, and a hundred other things.

But this is not all. This Doctrine hath not only *no certain Foundation* in Scripture, but I have a far heavier charge againſt it, namely, that it undermines the very foundation of Chriſtianity it ſelf. And ſurely nothing ought to be admitted to be a part of the *Chriſtian Doctrine* which deſtroys the reaſon of our belief of the whole. And that this Doctrine does ſo, will appear evidently, if we conſider what was the main argument which the Apoſtles uſed to convince the world of the *truth of Chriſtianity*; and that was this, *That our bleſſed Saviour, the Author of this Doctrine, wrought ſuch and ſuch miracles, and particularly that he roſe again from the dead.* And this they proved becauſe they were eye-witneſſes of his miracles, and had ſeen him and converſed with him after he was riſen from the dead. But what if their ſenſes did deceive them in this matter? then it cannot be denied but that the main proof of Chriſtianity falls to the ground.

Well! We will now ſuppoſe (as the Church of *Rome* does) *Tranſubſtantiation* to have been one principal part of the Chriſtian Doctrine which the Apoſtles preached. But if this Doctrine be true, then all mens ſenſes are deceived in a plain ſenſible matter, wherein 'tis as hard for them to be deceived as in any thing in the world: For two things can hardly be imagin'd more different, than a *little bit* of wafer and the *whole body* of a man.

So that the Apoſtles perſuading men to believe this Doctrine perſuaded them not to truſt their ſenſes, and yet the argument which they uſed to perſuade them to this was built upon the direct contrary principle, that *mens ſenſes are to be truſted.* For if they be not, then notwithſtanding all the evidence the Apoſtles offer'd for the reſurrection of our Saviour, he might not be riſen, and ſo the faith of Chriſtians was vain. So that they repreſent the Apoſtles as abſurd as is poſſible, *viz.* going about to perſuade men out of their ſenſes by virtue of an argument, the whole ſtrength whereof depends upon the certainty of ſenſe.

And now the matter is brought to a fair iſſue; If the teſtimony of *ſenſe* be to be relied upon, then *Tranſubſtantiation* is falſe; If it be not, then no man is ſure that Chriſtianity is true. For the utmoſt aſſurance that the Apoſtles had of the truth of Chriſtianity was the teſtimony of their own ſenſes concerning our Saviour's Miracles, and this teſtimony every man hath againſt *Tranſubſtantiation.* From whence it plainly follows, that no man (no not the Apoſtles themſelves) had more reaſon to believe *Chriſtianity* to be true, than every man hath to believe *Tranſubſtantiation* to be falſe. And we who did not ſee our Saviour's Miracles (as the Apoſtles did) and have only a credible relation of them, but do ſee the *Sacrament*, have leſs evidence of the *truth of Chriſtianity* than of the *falſhood* of *Tranſubſtantiation.*

But cannot God impoſe upon the ſenſes of men, and repreſent things to them otherwiſe than they are? Yes, undoubtedly. And if he hath revealed that he doth this, are we not to believe him? Moſt certainly. But then we ought to be aſſured that he hath made ſuch a Revelation; which *Aſſurance* no man can have, the certainty of ſenſe being taken away.

I ſhall preſs the buſineſs a little farther. Suppoſing the *Scripture* to be a *Divine Revelation*, and that theſe words (*This is my Body*) if they be in Scripture, muſt neceſſarily be taken in the ſtrict and literal ſenſe; I ask now, what greater evidence any man has that theſe words (*This is my Body*) are in the Bible, than every man has that the Bread is not chang'd in the Sacrament? Nay no man has ſo much; for we have only the evidence of *one* ſenſe that theſe words are in the Bible, but that the Bread is not chang'd we have the concurring teſtimony of *ſeveral* of our ſenſes. In a word, if this be once admitted that the *Senſes* of all men are deceived in one of the moſt plain ſenſible matters that can be, there is no certain means left either to convey or prove a *Divine Revelation* to men; nor is there any way to confute the groſſeſt impoſtures in the world: For if the clear evidence of all mens ſenſes be not ſufficient for this purpoſe, let any man, if he can, find a better and more convincing argument.

5. I will inſtance but in one *Doctrine* more; And that ſhall be, their *Doctrine* of *depoſing Kings* in caſe of Hereſy, and abſolving their Subjects from their Allegiance to them. And this is not a mere *ſpeculative doctrine*, but hath been put in practice many a time by the Biſhops of *Rome*, as every one knows that is vers'd in Hiſtory. For the troubles and confuſions which were occaſion'd by this very thing make up a good part of the Hiſtory of ſeveral Ages.

I hope no body expects that I ſhould take the pains to ſhew that this was not the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, nor of the Primitive Chriſtians. The *Papiſts* are many of them ſo far from pretending this, that in ſome times and places, when it is not ſeaſonable and for their purpoſe, we have much a-do to perſuade them that ever it was their Doctrine. But if *Tranſubſtantiation* be their Doctrine, *this* is; for they came both out of the ſame Forge, I mean the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the Third. And if (as they tell us) *Tranſubſtantiation* was then eſtabliſh'd ſo was *this*. And indeed one would think they were Twins and brought forth at the ſame time, they are ſo like one another, both of them ſo monſtrouſly unreaſonable.

II. I come now in the *ſecond* place to conſider ſome *Practices* of the Church of *Rome*, which I am afraid will prove as bad as her *Doctrines*. I ſhall inſtance in theſe five.

1. Their celebrating of their Divine ſervice *in an unknown tongue*. And that not only contrary to the practice of the Primitive Church, and to the great end and deſign of Religious Worſhip, which is the edification of thoſe who are concerned in it, (and it is hard to imagine how men can be edified by what they do not underſtand) but likewiſe in direct contradiction to St. *Paul*, who hath no leſs than a whole Chapter wherein he confutes this practice as fully, and condemns it as plainly as any thing is condemned in the whole Bible. And they that can have the face to maintain that this practice was not condemned by St. *Paul*, or that it was allowed and uſed in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, need not be aſhamed to ſet up for the defence of any paradox in the World.

2. The Communion *in one kind*. And that notwithſtanding that even by their own acknowledgment our Saviour inſtituted it in both kinds, and the Primitive Church adminiſtred it in both kinds. This I muſt acknowledge is *no addition* to Chriſtianity but *a ſacrilegious taking away* of an eſſential part of the Sacrament. For the *Cup* is as eſſential a part of the inſtitution as the *Bread*; and they might as well, and by the ſame authority, take away the one as the other, and both as well as either.

3. Their worſhipping of *Images*. Which practice (notwithſtanding all their diſtinctions about it, which are no other but what the *Heathens* uſed in the ſame caſe) is as point-blank againſt the *ſecond commandment*, as a *deliberate* and *malicious killing* of a man is againſt the *ſixth*. But if the caſe be ſo plain, a man would think that at leaſt the Teachers and Guides of that Church ſhould be ſenſible of it. Why, they are ſo, and afraid the people ſhould be ſo too, and therefore in their ordinay *Catechiſms* and *Manuals* of Devotion they leave out the *ſecond Commandment*, and divide the *tenth* into two to make up the number; leſt if the common people ſhould know it their Conſciences ſhould ſtart at the doing of a thing ſo directly contrary to the plain command of God.

4. The worſhipping of the *bread* and *wine* in the Euchariſt, out of a falſe and groundleſs perſuaſion, *that they are ſubſtantially changed into the body and blood of Chriſt*. Which if it be not true (and it hath good fortune if it be, for certainly it is one of the moſt incredible things in the whole World) then by the confeſſion of ſeveral of their own learned Writers, they are guilty of *groſs Idolatry*.

5. The worſhip and invocation of *Saints* and *Angels*; and particularly of the Virgin *Mary*, which hath now for ſome Ages been a principal part of their Religion. Now a man may juſtly wonder that ſo conſiderable a part of Religion as they make this to be ſhould have no manner of foundation in the Scripture. Does our Saviour any where ſpeak one word concerning the worſhipping of Her? Nay, does he not take all occaſions to reſtrain all extravagant apprehenſions and imaginations concerning honour due to Her, as foreſeeing the degeneracy of the Church in this thing? When he was told that his Mother and Brethren were without; *Who* (ſays he) *are my mother and my brethren? He that doth the will of my Father, the ſame is my mother, and ſiſter, and brother*. And when the Woman brake forth into that rapture concerning the bleſſed Mother of our Lord, *Bleſſed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee ſuck!* Our Saviour diverts to another thing, *Yea rather, bleſſed are they that hear the word of God and keep it*. Does either our Saviour or his Apoſtles in all their particular Precepts and Directions concerning Prayer, and the manner of it, and by whom we are to addreſs our ſelves to God, give the leaſt intimation of praying to the Virgin *Mary*, or making uſe of her Mediation? And can any man believe, that if this had been the practice of the Church from the beginning, our *Saviour* and his Apoſtles would have been ſo ſilent about ſo conſiderable a part of Religion; inſomuch that in all the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles I do not remember that her name is ſo much as once mentioned? And yet the worſhip of her is at this day in the Church of *Rome*, and hath been ſo for ſeveral Ages, a main part of their publick worſhip, yea and of their private devotions too; in which it is uſual with them to ſay *ten Ave Maries* for *one Pater Noſter*; that is, for one Prayer they make to Almighty God, they make ten addreſſes to the bleſſed Virgin; for that is the proportion obſerved in their *Roſaries*. He that conſiders *this*, and had never ſeen the *Bible*, would have been apt to think that there had been more ſaid concerning *Her* in Scripture, than either concerning *God*, or our bleſſed *Saviour*; and that the New Teſtament were full from one end to the other of precepts and exhortations to the worſhipping of Her; and yet when all is done, I challenge any man to ſhew me ſo much as one ſentence in the whole Bible that ſounds that way. And there is as little in the Chriſtian Writers of the firſt three hundred years. The truth is, *this practice* began to creep in among ſome ſuperſtitious people about the middle of the *fourth Century*: And I remember particularly,

that *Epiphanius* who lived about that time calls it the *Hereſy of the Women.*

And thus I have given you ſome Inſtances of ſeveral *Doctrines* and *Practices* which the Church of *Rome* hath built upon the Foundation of *Chriſtianity*. Much more might have been ſaid of them, but from what hath been ſaid any man may eaſily diſcern how dangerous they are to the ſalvation of men.

I proceed now in the Second place,

II. To conſider, Whether our granting a *poſſibility of ſalvation*, though with great hazard, to thoſe in the Communion of the *Roman* Church, and their denying it to us, be a ſufficient argument and encouragement to any man to quit our Church and go to theirs. And there is the more need to conſider this, becauſe this is the great *popular argument* wherewith the *emiſſaries* and *agents* of that Church are wont to aſſault our people. *Your Church* (ſay they) *grants that a Papiſt may be ſaved*; *Ours denies that a Proteſtant can be ſaved*; *therefore it is ſafeſt to be of our Church, in which ſalvation by the acknowledgment of both ſides is poſſible.*

For anſwer to this I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this is ſo far from being a *good argument* that it is ſo intolerably *weak* and *ſophiſtical* that any conſiderate man ought to be aſham'd to be catch'd by it. For either it is good of it ſelf and ſufficient to perſuade a man to relinquiſh our Church, and to paſs over to theirs, without entring into the merits of the cauſe on either ſide, and without comparing the Doctrines and Practices of both the Churches together, or it is not. If it be not ſufficient *of it ſelf* to perſuade a man to leave our Church, without comparing the Doctrines on both ſides, then it is to no purpoſe, and there is nothing got by it. For if upon examination and comparing of Doctrines the one appear to be *true* and the other *falſe*, this alone is a ſufficient inducement to any man to cleave to that Church where the true Doctrine is found; and then there is no need of this argument.

If it be ſaid that this argument is good in it ſelf without the examination of the Doctrines of both Churches; this ſeems a very ſtrange thing for any man to affirm, *That it is reaſon enough to a man to be of any Church, whatever her Doctrines and Practices be, if ſhe do but damn thoſe that differ from her, and if the Church that differs from her do but allow a poſſibility of ſalvation in her Communion.*

But they who uſe this *argument*, pretend that it is ſufficient of it ſelf; and therefore I ſhall apply my ſelf to ſhew, as briefly and plainly as I can, the miſerable *weakneſs* and *inſufficiency* of it to ſatisfy any man's conſcience or prudence to change his Religion. And to this end I ſhall,

1. Shew the weakneſs of the *principle* upon which this *argument* relies.

2. Give ſome *parallel inſtances* by which it will clearly appear that it concludes falſe.

3. I ſhall take notice of ſome *groſs abſurdities* that follow from it.

4. Shew how unfit it is to work upon thoſe to whom it is propounded. And

5. How improper it is to be urged by thoſe that make uſe of it.

I. I ſhall ſhew the weakneſs of the *principle* upon which this *argument* relies; And that is this, *That whatever different parties in Religion agree in, is ſafeſt to be choſen.* The true conſequence of which *principle* if it be driven to the head, is to perſuade men to forſake Chriſtianity, and to make them take up in the principles of *natural Religion*, for in theſe all Religions do agree. For if this *principle* be true, and ſignify any thing, it is dangerous to embrace any thing wherein the ſeveral parties in Religion differ; becauſe that only is ſafe and prudent to be choſen wherein all agree. So that this *ar-*

gument, if the foundation of it be good, will perſuade farther than thoſe who make uſe of it deſire it ſhould do; for it will not only make men forſake the *Proteſtant Religion*, but *Popery* too; and which is much more conſiderable, *Chriſtianity* it ſelf.

II. I will give ſome *parallel inſtances* by which it will clearly be ſeen that this *argument* concludes falſe. The *Donatiſts* denied the Baptiſm of the *Catholicks* to be good, but the *Catholicks* acknowledged the Baptiſm of the *Donatiſts* to be valid. So that both ſides were agreed that the Baptiſm of the *Donatiſts* was good, therefore the ſafeſt way for St. *Auſtin* and other *Catholicks* (according to this *argument*) was to be baptized again by the *Donatiſts*, becauſe by the acknowledgment of both ſides Baptiſm among them was valid.

But to come nearer to the Church of *Rome.* Several in that Church hold *the perſonal Infallibility of the Pope, and the lawfulneſs of depoſing and killing Kings for Hereſy* to be *de fide*, that is, neceſſary Articles of Faith, and conſequently, that whoever does not believe them cannot be ſaved. But a great many *Papiſts* though they believe theſe things to be no matters of Faith, yet they think thoſe that hold them may be ſaved, and they are generally very favourable towards them. But now, according to this *argument*, they ought all to be of their opinion in theſe points becauſe both ſides are agreed that *they that hold them may be ſaved*; but one ſide poſitively ſays that *men cannot be ſaved if they do not hold them.*

But my Text furniſhes me with as good an inſtance to this purpoſe as can be deſired. St. *Paul* here in the Text acknowledgeth the *poſſibility* of the *ſalvation* of thoſe *who built hay and ſtubble upon the foundation of Chriſtianity*; *that they might be ſaved*, tho with great difficulty, and as it were *out of the fire.* But now among thoſe builders with hay and ſtubble there were thoſe who denied the poſſibility of St. *Paul*'s ſalvation and of thoſe who were of his mind. We are told of ſome who built the *Jewiſh* Ceremonies and obſervances upon the foundation of Chriſtianity, and ſaid that unleſs men were Circumciſed and kept the Law of *Moſes* they could not be ſaved. So that by this argument St. *Paul* and his followers ought to have gone over to thoſe *Judaizing Chriſtians*, becauſe it was acknowledged on both ſides that they might be ſaved. But theſe *Judaizing Chriſtians* were as uncharitable to St. *Paul* and other Chriſtians, as the Church of *Rome* is now to us, for they ſaid poſitively *that they could not be ſaved.* But can any man think that St. *Paul* would have been moved by this argument, to leave a ſafe and certain way of ſalvation for that which was only poſſible, and that with great difficulty and hazard? The argument you ſee is the very ſame, and yet it concludes the wrong way; which plainly ſhews that it is a *contingent argument*, and concludes uncertainly and by chance, and therefore no man ought to be moved by it.

III. I ſhall take notice of ſome *groſs abſurdities* that follow from it. I ſhall mention but theſe two.

1. According to this *principle* it is always ſafeſt to be on the *uncharitable ſide.* And yet uncharitableneſs is as bad an evidence, either of a true Chriſtian, or a true Church, as a man would wiſh. *Charity* is one of the moſt eſſential marks of Chriſtianity, and what the Apoſtle ſaith of particular Chriſtians is as true of whole Churches, *that though they have all Faith, yet if they have not Charity they are nothing.*

I grant that no Charity teacheth men to ſee others damned and not to tell them the danger of their condition. But it is to be conſider'd that the damning

ing of men is a very hard thing, and therefore whenever we do it the caſe muſt be wonderfully plain. And is it ſo in this matter? They of the Church of *Rome* cannot deny but that we embrace all the Doctrines of our Saviour contain'd in the Apoſtles Creed, and determined by the four firſt General Councils: and yet they will not allow this and a good life to put us within a poſſibility of Salvation, becauſe we will not ſubmit to all the innovations they would impoſe upon us. And yet I think there is ſcarce any *Doctrine* or *Practice* in difference between them and us, which ſome or other of their moſt learned Writers have not acknowledged either not to be ſufficiently contained in Scripture, or not to have been held and practiſed by the primitive Church; ſo that nothing can excuſe their uncharitableneſs towards us. And they pay dear for the little advantage they get by this *argument*, for they do what in them lies to make themſelves no Chriſtians that they may prove themſelves the truer and more Chriſtian Church. A *medium* which we do not deſire to make uſe of.

2. If this *argument* were good, then by this trick a man may bring over all the world to agree with him in an error which another does not account damnable, whatever it be, provided he do but damn all thoſe that do not hold it; and there wants nothing but *confidence* and *uncharitableneſs* to do this. But is there any ſenſe, that another mans boldneſs and want of charity ſhould be an argument to move me to be of his opinion? I cannot illuſtrate this better, than by the difference between a skilful Phyſician and a Mountebank. A *learned* and a *skilful Phyſician* is modeſt, and ſpeaks *juſtly* of things: he ſays, that ſuch a method of cure which he hath directed is ſafe, and withal, that that which the *Mountebank* preſcribes may poſſibly do the work, but there is great hazard and danger in it; But the *Mountebank*, who never talks of any thing leſs than *Infallible cures*, (and always the more *Mountebank* the ſtronger pretence to *Infallibility*) he is *poſitive* that that method which the *Phyſician* preſcribes will deſtroy the Patient, but his receipt is infallible and never fails. Is there any reaſon in this caſe, that this man ſhall carry it merely by his *confidence?* And yet if this *argument* be good, the ſafeſt way is to reject the *Phyſician*'s advice and to ſtick to the *Mountebank*'s. For both ſides are agreed, that there is a poſſibility of cure in the *Mountebank*'s method, but not in the *Phyſician*'s; and ſo the whole force of the argument lies in the *confidence* of an *ignorant man*.

IV. This *argument* is very unfit to work upon *thoſe* to whom it is propounded: For either they believe we ſay true in this, or not. If they think we do not, they have no reaſon to be moved by what we ſay. If they think we do, why do they not take in all that we ſay in this matter? Namely, that though it be poſſible for ſome in the Communion of the *Roman* Church to be ſaved, yet it is very hazardous; and that they are in a ſafe condition already in our Church. And why then ſhould a *bare poſſibility*, accompanied with infinite and apparent hazard, be an argument to any man to run into that danger?

Laſtly, This *argument* is very improper to be urged by thoſe who make uſe of it. Half of the ſtrength of it lies in this, that we *Proteſtants* acknowledge that *it is poſſible a Papiſt may be ſaved*. But why ſhould they lay any ſtreſs upon this? What matter is it what we Hereticks ſay, who are ſo damnably miſtaken in all other things? Methinks if there were no other reaſon, yet becauſe we ſay it, it ſhould ſeem to them to be unlikely to be true. But I perceive when it ſerves for their purpoſe we have ſome little credit and authority among them.

By this time I hope every one is in ſome meaſure ſatisfied of the *weakneſs* *of this argument*, which is ſo tranſparent that no wiſe man can honeſtly uſe it, and he muſt have a very odd underſtanding that can be cheated by it. The truth is, it is a *caſual and contingent argument*, and ſometimes it concludes right, and oftner wrong; and therefore no prudent man can be moved by it, except only in one caſe, when all things are ſo equal on both ſides that there is nothing elſe in the whole world to determine him; which ſurely can never happen in matters of Religion, neceſſary to be believed. No man is ſo weak, as not to conſider in the change of his Religion the *merits* of the *cauſe it ſelf*; as not to examine the *Doctrines* and *Practices* of the Churches on both ſides; as not to take notice of the *confidence* and *Charity* of both Parties, together with all other things which ought to move a conſcientious and a prudent man: And if upon enquiry there appear to be a clear advantage on either ſide, then this *argument* is needleſs and comes too late, becauſe the work is already done without it.

Beſides, that the great hazard of ſalvation in the *Roman* Church (which we declare upon account of the *Doctrines* and *Practices* which I have mentioned) ought to deter any man much more from that Religion, than the acknowledged poſſibility of ſalvation in it ought to encourage any man to the embracing of it; Never did any Chriſtian Church build ſo much *hay* and *ſtubble* upon the *foundation* of Chriſtianity, and therefore *thoſe that are ſaved in it muſt be ſaved*, as it were, *out of the fire*. And tho *Purgatory* be not meant in the Text, yet it is a Doctrine very well ſuited to their manner of building; for there is need of an *ignis purgatorius*, of a *fire* to try their work what it is, and to *burn* up their *hay* and *ſtubble*. And I have ſo much Charity (and I deſire always to have it) as to hope, that a great many among them who lived piouſly, and have been almoſt inevitably detain'd in that Church by the prejudice of education and an invincible ignorance, will upon a *general Repentance* find mercy with God; and *though their works ſuffer loſs, and be burnt*, yet *they themſelves may eſcape, as out of the fire*. But as for thoſe who had the opportunities of coming to the knowledge of the truth, if they continue in the errors of that Church, or apoſtatize from the truth, I think their condition ſo far from being ſafe that there muſt be extraordinary favourable circumſtances in their caſe to give a man hopes of their ſalvation.

I have now done with the *two* things I propounded to ſpeak to. And I am ſorry that the *neceſſary defence* of our Religion, againſt the *reſtleſs importunities* and *attempts* of our adverſaries upon all ſorts of perſons, hath engaged me to ſpend ſo much time in matters of diſpute, which I had much rather have employed in another way. Many of you can be my witneſſes that I have conſtantly made it my buſineſs, in this great Preſence and Aſſembly to plead againſt the *impieties* and *wickedneſs* of men, and have endeavoured by the beſt arguments I could think of to gain men over to a *firm belief* and ſerious *practice* of the main things of Religion. And I do aſſure you, I had much rather perſuade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or denomination of Chriſtians whatſoever. For I doubt not but *the belief of the ancient Creed*, provided we entertain nothing that is deſtructive of it, *together with a good life, will certainly ſave a man*; and without this no man can have reaſonable hopes of ſalvation, no not in an infallible Church, if there were any ſuch to be found in the world.

I have been, according to my opportunities, not a negligent obſerver of the *genius* and humour of the ſeveral Sects and Profeſſions in Religion; and upon the whole matter, I do in my conſcience believe the Church of *England* to be the beſt conſtituted Church this day in the world; and that as to the main, the *Doctrine*, and *Government*, and *Worſhip* of it, are excellently framed to make men *ſoberly Religious:* Securing men on the one hand, from the wild freaks of *Enthuſiaſm*; and on the other, from the groſs follies of *Superſtition*. And our Church hath this peculiar advantage above ſeveral Profeſſions that we know in the world, that it acknowledgeth a due and juſt ſubordination to the *civil Authority*, and hath always been untainted in its *Loyalty*.

And now ſhall every trifling conſideration be ſufficient to move a man to relinquiſh ſuch a Church? There is no greater diſparagement to a man's underſtanding, no greater argument of a light and ungenerous mind, than raſhly to change one's Religion. *Religion* is our greateſt concernment of all other, and it is not every *little argument*, no nor a great noiſe about *infallibility*, nothing but very *plain* and *convincing evidence*, that ſhould ſway a man in this caſe. But they are utterly inexcuſable who make a change of ſuch concernment upon the inſinuations of one ſide only, without ever hearing what can be ſaid for the Church they were baptized and brought up in before they leave it. They that can yield thus eaſily to the impreſſions of every one that hath a deſign and intereſt to make *Proſelytes*, may at this rate of diſcretion change their *Religion* twice a day, and inſtead of *morning* and *evening Prayer*, they may have a *morning* and *evening Religion*.

Therefore for God's ſake, and for our own Souls ſake, and for the ſake of our Reputation let us conſider and *ſhew our ſelves men*; Let us not ſuffer our ſelves to be ſhaken and carried away with every wind. Let us not run our ſelves into danger when we may be ſafe. Let us ſtick to the *foundation of Religion*, the *Articles* of our *common belief*, and build upon them gold, and ſilver, and precious ſtones, I mean, the *virtues and actions of a good life*; and if we would do this, we ſhould not be apt to ſet ſuch a value upon *hay* and *ſtubble*. If we would ſincerely endeavour to live *holy* and *virtuous lives*, we ſhould not need to caſt about for a *Religion* which may furniſh us with eaſy and indirect ways to get to Heaven.

I will conclude all with the Apoſtle's Exhortation, *Wherefore my beloved brethren be ye ſtedfaſt and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

Now the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the ſheep, by the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XII.

Of the Inward Peace and Pleaſure which attends Religion.

PSAL. CXIX. 156.

Great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing ſhall offend them.

IN theſe words there are two things contained, the Deſcription of a good man, and the Reward of his goodneſs.

1. The Deſcription of a good man: He is ſaid to be one that *loves the Law* of God, that is, that loves to meditate upon it, and to practiſe it.

2. The Reward of his goodneſs; *Great peace have they that love thy Law.* The word *Peace* is many times uſed in Scripture in a very large ſenſe, ſo as to comprehend all kind of happineſs: ſometimes it ſignifies outward peace and quiet, in oppoſition to war and contention; and ſometimes inward peace and contentment in oppoſition to inward trouble and anguiſh. I underſtand the *Text* chiefly in this laſt ſenſe, not wholly excluding either of the other.

My deſign at preſent from theſe words is, to recommend Religion to men from the conſideration of that inward peace and pleaſure which attends it. And ſurely nothing can be ſaid more to the advantage of Religion in the opinion of conſiderate men than this. For the aim of all Philoſophy, and the great ſearch of wiſe men, hath been how to attain peace and tranquility of mind. And if Religion be able to give this, a greater commendation need not be given to Religion.

But before I enter upon this argument, I ſhall premiſe *two* things by way of Caution:

Firſt, That theſe kind of Obſervations are not to be taken too ſtrictly and rigorouſly, as if they never failed in any one inſtance. *Ariſtotle* obſerved long ſince, that moral and proverbial ſayings are underſtood to be true generally and for the moſt part; and that is all the truth that is to be expected in them; As, when *Solomon* ſays, *Train up a child in the way wherein he ſhall go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*: This is not to be ſo taken as if no child that is piouſly educated did ever miſcarry afterwards, but that the good education of children is the beſt way to make good men, and commonly approved to be ſo by experience. So here, when it is ſaid that *great peace have they that love God's Law*; the meaning is that Religion hath generally this effect, though in ſome caſes, and as to ſome perſons, it may be accidentally hindred.

Secondly, When I ſay that Religion gives peace and tranquility to our minds, this is chiefly to be underſtood of a Religious ſtate in which a man is well ſettled and confirmed, and not of our firſt entrance into it, for that is more or leſs troubleſome according as we make it. If we begin a religious courſe betimes, before we have contracted any great guilt, and before the habits of ſin be grown ſtrong in us, the work goes on eaſily without any great conflict or reſiſtance. But the caſe is otherwiſe when a man breaks off from a wicked life, and becomes religious from the direct contrary courſe in which he hath been long and deeply engaged. In this caſe no man is ſo unreaſonable as to deny, that there is a great deal of ſenſible trouble and difficulty in the making of this change; but when it is once made, peace and comfort will ſpring up by degrees, and daily increaſe as we grow more confirmed and eſtabliſhed in a good courſe.

Theſe *two* things being premiſed, I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew that Religion gives a man the greateſt pleaſure and ſatisfaction of mind, and that there is no true peace, nor any comparable pleaſure to be had in a contrary courſe. And that from theſe two heads. From *Teſtimony of Scripture*; and from the *Nature of Religion* which is apt to produce peace and tranquility of mind.

I. *Firſt*, From *Teſtimony of Scripture.* I ſhall ſelect ſome of thoſe *Texts* which are more full and expreſs to this purpoſe, *Job* 22. 21. ſpeaking of God, *Acquaint thy ſelf now with him and be at peace. To acquaint our ſelves with God* is a phraſe of the ſame importance with *coming to God*, and *ſeeking of him*, and many other like expreſſions in Scripture which ſignify nothing elſe but to become religious, *Pſal.* 37. 38. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace:* Or, as theſe words are rendred according to the LXX. in our old Tranſlation, *Keep innocency, take heed to the thing that is right, for that ſhall bring thee peace at the laſt.* Prov. 3. 17. Where *Solomon* ſpeaking of *Wiſdom*, which with him is but another name for *Religion*, ſays, *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſs, and all her paths are peace.* Iſa. 32. 17. *The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.* Matth. 11. 28, 29. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you reſt.* Now *to come to Chriſt* is to become his Diſciples, to believe and practice his Doctrine; for ſo our *Saviour* explains himſelf in the next words, *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye ſhall find reſt for your ſouls.* Rom. 2. 10. *Glory, and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good.*

And on the contrary the *Scripture* repreſents the condition of a ſinner to be full of trouble and diſquiet. *David* tho he was a very good man yet when he had grievouſly offended God the anguiſh of his mind was ſuch, as even to diſorder and diſtemper his body, *Pſal.* 38. 2, 3, 4. *Thine arrows ſtick faſt in me, and thy hand preſſeth me ſore; there is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh becauſe of thine anger, neither is there any reſt in my bones becauſe of my ſin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head, and as an heavy burthen they are too heavy for me.* Iſa. 57. 20, 21. *The wicked are like the troubled Sea when it cannot reſt, whoſe waters caſt up mire and dirt; there is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.* And *Iſa.* 59. 7, 8. *Miſery and deſtruction are in their paths, and the way of peace they know not; they have made themſelves crooked paths, whoſoever goeth therein ſhall not know peace.* Rom. 2. 9. *Tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil.*

You ſee how full and expreſs the *Scripture* is in this matter. I come now, in the

II. *Second* place, To give you a more particular account of this from the *Nature of Religion*, which is apt to produce peace and tranquility of mind. And that I ſhall do in theſe three particulars.

1. Religion is apt to remove the chief cauſes of inward trouble and diſquiet.

2. It furniſhes us with all the true cauſes of peace and tranquility of mind.

3. The reflection upon a religious courſe of life and all the actions of it, doth afterwards yield great pleaſure and ſatisfaction.

Firſt, *Religion is apt to remove the chief cauſes of inward trouble and diſquiet.* The chief cauſes of inward trouble and diſcontent are theſe *two*, *Doubting* and anxiety of mind, and *Guilt* of Conſcience. Now Religion is apt to free us from both theſe.

1. From *Doubting* and anxiety of mind. Irreligion and Atheiſm makes a man full of doubts and jealouſies whether he be in the right, and whether at laſt things will not prove quite otherwiſe than he hath raſhly determined. For tho a man endeavour never ſo much to ſettle himſelf in the principles of Infidelity, and to perſuade his mind that there is no God, and conſequently that there are no rewards to be hoped for, nor puniſhments to be feared in another life; yet he can never attain to a ſteddy and unſhaken perſuaſion of theſe things: and however he may pleaſe himſelf with witty reaſons againſt the common belief of mankind, and ſmart repartees to their arguments, and bold and pleaſant railery about theſe matters; yet I dare ſay, no man ever ſate down in a clear and full ſatisfaction concerning them. For when he hath done all that he can to reaſon himſelf out of Religion, his conſcience ever and anon recoils upon him, and his natural thoughts and apprehenſions riſe up againſt his reaſonings, and all his wit and ſubtilty is confuted and born down by a ſecret and ſtrong ſuſpicion, which he can by no means get out of his mind, that things may be otherwiſe.

And the reaſon hereof is plain, becauſe all this is an endeavour againſt nature and thoſe vigorous inſtincts which God hath planted in the minds of men to the contrary. For whenever our minds are free and not violently hurried away by paſſion, nor blinded by prejudice, they do of themſelves return to their firſt and moſt natural apprehenſion of things. And this is the reaſon why when the Atheiſt falls into any great calamity, and is awakened to an impartial conſideration of things by the apprehenſion of Death and Judgment, and deſpairs of enjoying any longer thoſe pleaſures for the ſake of which he hath all this while rebelled againſt Religion, his courage preſently ſinks, and all his arguments fail him, and his caſe is now too ſerious to admit of jeſting, and at the bottom of his ſoul he doubts of all that which he aſſerted with ſo much confidence and ſet ſo good a face upon before, and can find no eaſe to his mind but in retreating from his former principles, nor no hopes of conſolation for himſelf but in acknowledging that God whom he hath denied, and imploring his mercy whom he hath affronted.

This is always the caſe of theſe perſons when they come to extremity, not to mention the infinite checks and rebukes which their own minds give them upon other occaſions; ſo that 'tis very ſeldom that theſe men have any tolerable enjoyment of themſelves, but are forced to run away from themſelves into company, and to ſtupify themſelves by intemperance, that they may not feel the fearful twitches and gripings of their own minds.

Whereas he who entertains the principles of Religion, and therein follows his own natural apprehenſions and the general voice of mankind, and is not conſcious to himſelf that he knowingly and wilfully lives contrary to theſe principles, hath no anxiety in his mind about theſe things; being verily perſuaded they are true, and that he hath all the reaſon in the world to think ſo; and if they ſhould prove otherwiſe (which he hath no other cauſe to ſuſpect) yet he hath this ſatisfaction, that he hath taken the wiſeſt courſe and hath conſulted his own preſent peace and future ſecurity infinitely better than the Atheiſt hath done, in caſe he ſhould prove to be miſtaken. For it is a fatal miſtake to think there is no God, if there be one; but a miſtake on the other hand hath no future bad conſequences depending upon it, nor indeed any great preſent inconvenience, Religion only reſtraining a man from doing ſome things, from moſt of which it is good he ſhould be reſtrained however; ſo that at the worſt the religious man is only miſtaken, but the Atheiſt is miſerable if he be miſtaken; *miſerable* beyond all imagination, and paſt all remedy.

2. Another, and indeed a principal cauſe of trouble and diſcontent to the minds of men is *Guilt*. Now Guilt is a conſciouſneſs to our ſelves that we have done amiſs, and the very thought that we have done amiſs is apt to lye very croſs in our minds and to cauſe great anguiſh and confuſion. Beſides that guilt is always attended with Fear, which naturally ſprings up in the mind of man from a ſecret apprehenſion of the miſchief and inconvenience that his ſin will bring upon him, and of the vengeance that hangs over him from God, and will overtake him either in this world, or in the other.

And tho the ſinner, while he is in full health and proſperity, may make a ſhift to divert and ſhake off theſe Fears; yet they frequently return upon him, and upon every little noiſe of danger, upon the apprehenſion of any calamity that comes near him, his guilty mind is preſently jealous that it is making towards him and is particularly levelled againſt him. For he is ſenſible that there is a juſt power above him to whoſe indignation he is continually liable, and therefore he is always in fear of him, and how long ſoever he may have eſcaped puniſhment in this world he cannot but dread the vengeance of the other; And theſe thoughts are a continual diſturbance to his mind and *in the midſt of laughter make his heart heavy*, and the longer he continues in a wicked courſe the more he multiplies the grounds and cauſes of his fears.

But now Religion frees a man from all this torment, either by preventing the cauſe of it, or directing to the cure; either by preſerving us from guilt, or clearing us of it in caſe we have contracted it. It preſerves us from guilt by keeping us innocent; and in caſe we have offended, it clears us of it by leading us to repentance and the amendment of our lives; which is the only way to recover the favour of God and the peace of our own conſciences, and to ſecure us againſt all apprehenſion of danger from the divine Juſtice; tho not abſolutely from all fear of puniſhment in this world, yet from that which is the greateſt danger of all, the condemnation and torment of the world to come. And by this means a man's mind is ſettled in perfect peace, Religion freeing him from thoſe tormenting fears of the Divine diſpleaſure, which he can upon no other terms rid himſelf of; whereas the ſinner is always ſowing the ſeeds of trouble in his own mind, and laying a foundation of continual diſcontent to himſelf.

Secondly, As Religion removes the chief grounds of trouble and diſquiet, ſo it *miniſters to us all the true cauſes of peace and tranquillity of mind.* Whoever lives according to the Rules of Religion lays theſe three great foundations of peace and comfort to himſelf.

1. He is ſatisfied that in being religious he doth that which is moſt reaſonable.

2. That he ſecures himſelf againſt the greateſt miſchiefs and dangers by making God his Friend.

3. That upon the whole matter he does in all reſpects moſt effectually conſult and promote his own intereſt and happineſs.

1. He is ſatisfied that he does that which is moſt reaſonable. And it is no ſmall pleaſure to be juſtified to our ſelves, to be ſatisfied that we are what we ought to be, and do what in reaſon we ought to do; that which beſt becomes us, and which according to the primitive intention of our Being is moſt natural, for whatever is natural is pleaſant. Now the practice of piety towards God, and of every other grace and virtue which Religion teaches us, are things reaſonable in themſelves, and what God when he made us intended we ſhould do. And a man is then pleaſed with himſelf and his own actions, when he doth what he is convinced he ought to do; and is then offended with himſelf, when he goes againſt the light of his own mind by neglecting his duty or doing contrary to it; for then his conſcience checks him, and there is ſomething within him that is uneaſy and puts him into diſorder. As when a man eats or drinks any thing that is unwholſom it offends his ſtomach, and puts his body into an unnatural and a reſtleſs ſtate.

For every thing is then at reſt and peace when it is in that ſtate in which Nature intended it to be, and being violently forced out of it, it is never quiet till it recover again. Now Religion and the practice of its virtues is the natural ſtate of the ſoul, the condition to which God deſigned it. As God made man a reaſonable Creature, ſo all the acts of Religion are reaſonable and ſuitable to our nature: And our ſouls are then in health when we are what the Laws of Religion require us to be, and do what they command us to do. And as we find an unexpreſſible eaſe and pleaſure when our body is in its perfect ſtate of health, and on the contrary every diſtemper cauſeth pain and uneaſineſs; ſo is it with the Soul. When Religion governs all our inclinations and actions, and the temper of our minds and the courſe of our lives is conformable to the precepts of it, all is at peace. But when we are otherwiſe, and live in any vicious practice, how can there be peace; ſo long as we act unreaſonably, and do thoſe things whereby we neceſſarily create trouble and diſturbance to our ſelves? How can we hope to be at eaſe ſo long as we are in a ſick and diſeaſed condition? Till the corruption that is in us be wrought out, our ſpirits will be in a perpetual tumult and fermentation; and it is as impoſſible for us to enjoy the peace and ſerenity of our minds as it is for a ſick man to be at eaſe: The man may uſe what arts of diverſion he will, and change from one place and poſture to another: but ſtill he is reſtleſs, becauſe there is that within him gives him pain and diſturbance, *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.* Such men may diſſemble their condition, and put on the face and appearance of pleaſantneſs and contentment; but God, who ſees all the ſecrets of mens hearts, knows it is far otherwiſe with them, *There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked.*

2. Another ground of peace which the Religious man hath is, That he hath made God his Friend. Now Friendſhip is peace and pleaſure both; It is mutual love, and that is a double pleaſure; And it is hard to ſay which is the greateſt, the pleaſure of loving God, or of knowing that he loves us. Now whoever ſincerely endeavours to pleaſe God may reſt perfectly aſſured that God hath no diſpleaſure againſt him; for *the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs, and his countenance ſhall behold the upright*; that is, he will be favourable to ſuch perſons. As *he hates the workers of iniquity,* ſo *he takes pleaſure in them that fear him, in ſuch as keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them.*

And being aſſured of his favour, we are ſecured againſt the greateſt dangers and the greateſt fears; and may ſay with *David, Return then unto thy reſt, O my ſoul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee: The Lord is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? The Lord is the ſtrength of my life,* *of whom ſhall I be afraid?* What can reaſonably trouble or diſcontent that man who hath made his peace with God and is reſtored to his favour, who is the beſt and moſt powerful friend, and can be the ſoreſt and moſt dangerous enemy in the whole world?

3. By being religious we do moſt effectually conſult our own intereſt and happineſs. A great part of Religion conſiſts in moderating our appetites and paſſions, and this naturally tends to the compoſure of our minds. He that lives piouſly and virtuouſly acts according to Reaſon, and in ſo doing maintains the preſent peace of his own mind; and not only ſo, but he lays the foundation of his future happineſs to all Eternity. For Religion gives a man the hopes of Eternal life; and all pleaſure does not conſiſt in preſent enjoyment; there is a mighty pleaſure alſo, in the firm belief and expectation of a future good; and if it be a great and laſting good, it will ſupport a man under a great many preſent evils. If Religion be certainly the way to avoid the greateſt evils, and to bring us to happineſs at laſt, we may contentedly bear a great many afflictions for its ſake. For tho all ſufferings be grievous yet it is pleaſant to eſcape great dangers, and to come to the poſſeſſion of a mighty good, tho it be with great difficulty and inconvenience to our ſelves. And when we come to heaven (if ever we be ſo happy as to get thither) it will be a new and greater pleaſure to us to remember the pains and troubles whereby we were ſaved and made happy.

So that all theſe put together are a firm foundation of peace and comfort to a good man. There is a great ſatisfaction in the very doing of our duty and acting reaſonably, tho there may happen to be ſome preſent trouble and inconvenience in it. But when we do not only ſatisfy our ſelves in ſo doing, but likewiſe pleaſe him whoſe favour is better than life, and whoſe frowns are more terrible than death; when in doing our duty we directly promote our own happineſs, and in ſerving God do moſt effectually ſerve our own intereſt, what can be imagined to miniſter more peace and pleaſure to the mind of man?

This is the *ſecond thing.* Religion furniſhes us with all the true cauſes of peace and tranquility of mind.

Thirdly, the reflection upon a religious and virtuous courſe of life doth afterwards yield a mighty pleaſure and ſatisfaction. And what can commend Religion more to us, than that the remembrance of any pious and virtuous action gives us ſo much contentment and delight? So that whatever difficulty and reluctancy we may find in the doing of it, to be ſure there is peace and ſatisfaction in the looking back upon it. No man ever reflected upon himſelf with regret for having done his duty to God or man; for having lived ſoberly, or righteouſly, or godly in this preſent world. Nay, on the contrary, the conſcience of any duty faithfully diſcharged, the memory of any good we have done does refreſh the ſoul with a ſtrange kind of pleaſure and joy, *Our rejoicing is this* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *the teſtimony of our conſciences, that in all ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation in the world.*

But on the other ſide, the courſe of a vicious life, all acts of impiety to God, of malice and injuſtice to men, of intemperance and exceſs in reference to our ſelves, do certainly leave a ſting behind them. And whatever pleaſure there may be in the preſent act of them, the memory of them is ſo tormenting that men are glad to uſe all the arts of diverſion to fence off the thoughts of them. One of the greateſt troubles in the world to a bad man is to look into himſelf, and to remember how he hath lived. I appeal to the conſciences of men whether this be not true.

And is not here now a mighty difference between theſe two courſes of life; that when we do any thing that is good, if there be any trouble in it it is ſoon over, but the pleaſure of it is perpetual: when we do a wicked action the pleaſure of it is ſhort and tranſient, but the trouble and ſting of it remains for ever? The reflection upon the good we have done gives a laſting ſatisfaction to our minds, but the remembrance of any evil committed by us leaves a perpetual diſcontent.

And, which is yet more conſiderable, a religious and virtuous courſe of life does then yield moſt peace and comfort when we moſt ſtand in need of it; in times of affliction and at the hour of death. When a man falls into any great calamity there is no comfort in the world like to that of a good conſcience; This makes all calm and ſerene within when there is nothing but clouds and darkneſs about him. So *David* obſerves of the good man, Pſal. 112. 4. *Unto the upright there ariſeth light in darkneſs.* All the pious and virtuous actions that we do are ſo many ſeeds of peace and comfort, ſown in our conſciences, which will ſpring up and flouriſh moſt in times of outward trouble and diſtreſs, *Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart.* And at the hour of death; *The righteous hath hopes in his death,* ſaith *Solomon.* And what a ſeaſonable refreſhment is it to the mind of man when the pangs of death are ready to take hold of him, and he is juſt ſtepping into the other world, to be able to look back with ſatisfaction upon a religious and well-ſpent life? Then if ever, the comforts of a good man do overflow, and a kind of heaven ſprings up in his mind, and he rejoiceth in the hopes of the glory of God. And that is a true and ſolid comfort indeed, which will ſtand by us in the day of adverſity, and ſtick cloſe to us when we have moſt need of it.

But with the ungodly it is not ſo: His guilt lies in wait for him, eſpecially againſt ſuch times; and is never more fierce and raging than in the day of diſtreſs; ſo that according as his troubles without are multiplied, ſo are his ſtings within. And ſurely affliction is then grievous indeed when it falls upon a gall'd and uneaſy mind. Were it not for this, outward afflictions might be tolerable; the *ſpirit of a man might bear his infirmities, but a wounded ſpirit who can bear?* But eſpecially at the hour of death. How does the guilt of his wicked life then ſtare him in the face? What ſtorms and tempeſts are raiſed in his ſoul? which make it like the troubled ſea when it cannot reſt. When Eternity, that fearful and amazing ſight preſents its ſelf to his mind, and he feels himſelf ſinking into the regions of darkneſs, and is every moment in a fearful expectation of meeting with the juſt reward of his deeds; with what regret does he then remember the ſins of his life? and how full of rage and indignation is he againſt himſelf for having neglected to know, when he had ſo many opportunities of knowing them, the things that belong to his peace; and which, becauſe he hath neglected them, are now and likely to be for ever hid from his eyes?

And if this be the true caſe of the righteous and wicked man, I need not multiply words, but may leave it to any man's thoughts in which of theſe conditions he would be. And ſurely the difference between them is ſo very plain that there can be no difficulty in the choice.

But now tho this diſcourſe be very true, yet for the full clearing of this matter it will be but fair to conſider what may be ſaid on the other ſide; And the rather, becauſe there are ſeveral objections which ſeem to be countenanced from experience, which is enough to overthrow the moſt plauſible ſpeculation. As

1. That wicked men ſeem to have a great deal of pleaſure and contentment in their vices.

2. That Religion impoſeth many harſh and grievous things, which ſeem to be inconſiſtent with that pleaſure and ſatisfaction I have ſpoken of.

3. That thoſe who are Religious are many times very diſconſolate and full of trouble.

To the *firſt*, I deny not that wicked men have ſome pleaſure in their vices; but when all things are rightly computed, and juſt abatements made, it will amount to very little. For it is the loweſt and meaneſt kind of pleaſure, it is chiefly the pleaſure of our bodies and our ſenſes, of our worſt part; the pleaſure of the beaſt, and not of the man; that which leaſt becomes us, and which we were leaſt of all made for. Thoſe ſenſual pleaſures which are lawful are much inferior to the leaſt ſatisfaction of the mind, and when they are unlawful they are always inconſiſtent with it. And *what is a man profited*, if to gain a little ſenſual pleaſure he loſe the peace of his ſoul? Can we find in our hearts to call that pleaſure which robs us of a far greater and higher ſatisfaction than it brings? The delights of ſenſe are ſo far from being the chief pleaſure which God deſigned us, that on the contrary he intended we ſhould take our chief pleaſure in the reſtraining and moderating of our ſenſual appetites and deſires, and in keeping them within the bounds of Reaſon and Religion.

And then, It is not a laſting pleaſure. Thoſe fits of mirth which wicked men have, how ſoon are they over? Like a ſudden blaze which after a little flaſh and noiſe is preſently gone. It is the compariſon of a very great and experienced man in theſe matters; *Like the cracking of thorns under a pot* (ſaith *Solomon*) *ſo is the laughter of the fool*, that is, the mirth of the wicked man; it may be loud, but it laſts not.

But, which is moſt conſiderable of all, the pleaſures of ſin bear no proportion to that long and black train of miſeries and inconveniences which they draw after them. Many times poverty and reproach, pains and diſeaſes upon our bodies, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doth evil.* So that if theſe pleaſures were greater than they are, a man had better be without them than purchaſe them at ſuch dear rates.

To the *ſecond*. That Religion impoſeth many harſh and grievous things, which ſeem to be inconſiſtent with that pleaſure and ſatisfaction I have ſpoken of: As, the bearing of perſecution, repentance and mortification, faſting and abſtinence, and many other rigors and ſeverities. As to perſecution; This Diſcourſe doth not pretend that Religion exempts men from outward troubles, but that, when they happen, it ſupports men under them better than any thing elſe. As for Repentance and Mortification; this chiefly concerns our firſt entrance into Religion after a wicked life, which I acknowledged in the beginning of this diſcourſe to be very grievous; But this doth not hinder but that tho Religion may be troubleſome at firſt to ſome perſons whoſe former ſins and crimes have made it ſo, it may be pleaſant afterwards when we are accuſtomed to it. And whatever the trouble of repentance be, it is unavoidable, unleſs we reſolve to be miſerable; for *except we repent we muſt periſh*. Now there is always a rational ſatisfaction in ſubmitting to a leſs inconvenience to remedy and prevent a greater. As for Faſting and Abſtinence, which is many times very helpful and ſubſervient to the ends of Religion, there is no ſuch extraordinary trouble in it if it be diſcreetly managed as is worth the ſpeaking of. And as for other rigors and ſeverities which ſome pretend Religion does impoſe, I have only this to ſay, that if men will play the fool, and make Religion more troubleſome than God hath made it, I cannot help that: And, that this is a falſe repreſentation of Religion which ſome in the world have made, as if it did chiefly conſiſt not in pleaſing God, but in diſpleaſing and tormenting our ſelves. This is not to paint Religion like her ſelf, but rather like one of the *Furies*, with nothing but whips and ſnakes about her.

To the *third*. That thoſe who are religious are many times very diſconſolate and full of trouble. This, I confeſs, is a great Objection indeed if Religion were the cauſe of this trouble, but there are other plain cauſes of it, to which Religion rightly underſtood is not acceſſary. As, falſe and miſtaken principles in Religion; the imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God; and a melancholy temper and diſpoſition. *Falſe and miſtaken principles in Religion.* As this for one; That God does not ſincerely deſire the ſalvation of men, but hath from all eternity effectually barr'd the greateſt part of mankind from all poſſibility of attaining that happineſs which he offers to them; and every one hath cauſe to fear that he may be in that number. This were a melancholy conſideration indeed, if it were true; but there is no ground either from Reaſon or Scripture to entertain any ſuch thought of God. Our *deſtruction is of our ſelves*; and no man ſhall be ruin'd by any decree of God who does not ruin himſelf by his own fault.

Or elſe, *the imperfection of our Religion and Obedience to God.* Some perhaps are very devout in ſerving God, but not ſo kind and charitable, ſo juſt and honeſt in their dealings with men. No wonder if ſuch perſons be diſquieted; the natural conſciences of men being not more apt to diſquiet them for any thing, than for the neglect of thoſe moral duties, which natural light teacheth them. Peace of conſcience is the effect of an impartial and univerſal obedience to the Laws of God; and I hope no man will blame Religion for that which plainly proceeds from the want of Religion.

Or laſtly, *A melancholy temper and diſpoſition*; which is not from Religion, but from our nature and conſtitution; and therefore Religion ought not to be charged with it.

And thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and plainly as I could, to repreſent to you what peace and pleaſure, what comfort and ſatisfaction, Religion rightly underſtood and ſincerely practiſed is apt to bring to the minds of men. And I do not know by what ſort of argument Religion can be more effectually recommended to wiſe and conſiderate men. For in perſuading men to be religious I do not go about to rob them of any true pleaſure and contentment, but to direct them to the very beſt, nay indeed the only way of attaining and ſecuring it.

I ſpeak this in great pity and compaſſion to thoſe who make it their great deſign to pleaſe themſelves, but do grievouſly miſtake the way to it. The direct way is that which I have ſet before you, a holy and virtuous life, *to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly and righteouſly and godly in this preſent world. A good man* (ſaith *Solomon*) *is ſatisfied from himſelf:* He hath the pleaſure of being wiſe and acting reaſonably; the pleaſure of being juſtified to himſelf in what he doth, and of being acquitted by the ſentence of his own mind. There is a great pleaſure in being innocent, becauſe that prevents guilt and trouble; It is pleaſant to be virtuous and good, becauſe that is to excel many others; and it is pleaſant to grow better, becauſe that is to excel our ſelves: Nay it is pleaſant even to mortify and ſubdue our luſts, becauſe that is Victory: It is pleaſant to command our appetites and paſſions, and to keep them in due order, within the bounds of Reaſon and Religion; becauſe this is a kind of Empire, this is to govern. It is naturally pleaſant to rule and have power over others, but he is the great and the abſolute Prince who commands himſelf. This is *the kingdom of God within us,* a dominion infinitely to be preferred before all *the Kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them.* It is the *Kingdom of God* deſcribed by the *Apoſtle, which* conſiſts *in righteouſneſs and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* In a word, the pleaſure of being good and of doing good is the chief happineſs of God himſelf.

But now the wicked man deprives himſelf of all this pleaſure, and creates perpetual diſcontent to his own mind. O the torments of a guilty conſcience! which the ſinner feels more or leſs all his life long. But, alas, thou doſt not yet know the worſt of it, no not in this world. What wilt thou do when thou comeſt to dye? What comfort wilt thou then be able to give thy ſelf? or what comfort can any one elſe give thee, when thy conſcience is miſerably rent and torn by thoſe waking furies which will then rage in thy breaſt, and thou knoweſt not which way to turn thy ſelf for eaſe; then, perhaps at laſt, the Prieſt is unwillingly ſent for, to patch up thy conſcience as well as he can, and to appeaſe the cries of it; and to force himſelf out of very pity and good nature *to ſay peace, peace, when there is no peace.* But alas man! what can we do? what comfort can we give thee, when thine iniquities teſtify againſt thee to thy very face? *How can there be peace,* when thy luſts and debaucheries, thy impieties to God and thy injuries to men have been ſo many? *How can there be peace,* when thy whole life hath been a continued contempt and provocation of Almighty God, and a perpetual violence and affront to the light and reaſon of thy own mind?

Therefore whatever temptation there may be in ſin at a diſtance, whatever pleaſure in the act and commiſſion of it, yet remember that it always goes off with trouble, and *will be bitterneſs in the end.* Thoſe words of *Solomon* have a terrible ſting in the concluſion of them, *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the ſight of thine eyes; but know that for all theſe things God will bring thee into judgment.*

This one thought which will very often unavoidably break into our minds (that *God will bring us into judgment*) is enough to daſh all our contentment, and to ſpoil all the pleaſure of a ſinful life. Never expect to be quiet in thine own mind, and to have the true enjoyment of thy ſelf till thou liveſt a virtuous and religious life.

And if this diſcourſe be true (as I am confident I have every man's conſcience on my ſide) I ſay, if this be true, let us venture to be wiſe and happy, that is, to be Religious. Let us reſolve to *break off our ſins by repentance,* to *fear God and keep his Commandments,* as ever we deſire to avoid the unſpeakable torments of a guilty mind, and would not be perpetually uneaſy to our ſelves.

Grant, we beſeech thee, Almighty God, that we may every one of us know and do in this our day the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes. And the God of peace which brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the ſheep, by the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in us always that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

The Nature and Benefit of Conſideration.

PSAL. CXIX. 59.

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.

THE two great cauſes of the ruin of men are *Infidelity*, and *want of conſideration*. Some do not believe the principles of Religion, or at leaſt have by arguing againſt them rendred them ſo doubtful to themſelves as to take away the force and efficacy of them: But theſe are but a very ſmall part of mankind, in compariſon of thoſe who periſh for want of conſidering theſe things. For moſt men take the principles of Religion for granted, *That there is a God*, and a *Providence*, and a *State of Rewards and Puniſhments after this life*, and never entertained any conſiderable doubt in their minds to the contrary: but for all this they never attended to the proper and natural conſequences of theſe principles, nor applied them to their own caſe; they never ſeriouſly conſidered the notorious inconſiſtency of their lives with this belief, and what manner of perſons they ought to be who are verily perſuaded of the truth of theſe things.

For no man that is convinced that there is a God, and conſiders the neceſſary and immediate conſequences of ſuch a perſuaſion, can think it ſafe to affront Him by a wicked life: No man that believes the infinite happineſs and miſery of another world, and conſiders withal that one of theſe ſhall certainly be his portion according as he demeans himſelf in this preſent life, can think it indifferent what courſe he takes. Men may thruſt away theſe thoughts and keep them out of their minds for a long time, but no man that enters into the ſerious conſideration of theſe matters can poſſibly think it a thing indifferent to him whether he be happy or miſerable for ever.

So that a great part of the evils of mens lives would be cured, if they would but once lay them to heart; would they but ſeriouſly conſider the conſequences of a wicked life, they would ſee ſo plain reaſon and ſo urgent a neceſſity for the reforming of it, that they would not venture to continue any longer in it. This courſe *David* took here in the Text, and he found the happy ſucceſs of it; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy Teſtimonies.*

In which words there are theſe two things conſiderable.

I. The courſe which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.*

II. The ſucceſs of this courſe. It produceth actual and ſpeedy reformation; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies; I made haſte and delayed not to keep thy commandments.*

Theſe are the two heads of my following diſcourſe, which when I have ſpoken to I ſhall endeavour to perſuade my ſelf and you to take the ſame courſe which *David* here did, and God grant that I may have the ſame effect.

I. We will conſider *the courſe which* David here *took* for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways*, or, as the words are render'd in our old Tranſlation, *I called my own ways to remembrance.* And this may either ſignify a general ſurvey and examination of his life, reſpecting indifferently the good or bad actions of it: Or elſe, which is more probable, it may ſpecially refer to the ſins and miſcarriages of his life; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my ſins to remembrance. Neither of theſe ſenſes can be much amiſs in order to the effect mentioned in the Text, the reformation and amendment of our lives; and therefore neither of them can reaſonably be excluded, though I ſhall principally inſiſt upon the latter.

1. This *thinking on our ways* may ſignify a general ſurvey and examination of our lives; reſpecting indifferently our good and bad actions. For *Way* is a metaphorical word, denoting the courſe of a man's life and actions. *I thought on my ways*, that is, I examined my life and called my ſelf to a ſtrict account for the actions of it; I compared them with the Law of God the rule and meaſure of my duty, and conſider'd how far I had obeyed that Law, or offended againſt it; how much evil I had been guilty of, and how little good I had done in compariſon of what I might and ought to have done: That by this means I might come to underſtand the true ſtate and condition of my ſoul, and diſcerning how many and great my faults and defects were, I might amend whatever was amiſs, and be more careful of my duty for the future.

And it muſt needs be a thing of excellent uſe for men to ſet apart ſome particular times for the examination of themſelves, that they may know how accounts ſtand between God and them. *Pythagoras* (or whoever were the Author of thoſe *golden verſes* which paſs under his name) doth eſpecially recommend this practice to his Scholars, every night before they ſlept to call themſelves to account for the actions of the day paſt; enquiring wherein they had tranſgreſſed, what good they had done that day, or omitted to do. And this no doubt is an admirable means to improve men in virtue, a moſt effectual way to keep our conſciences continually waking and tender, and to make us ſtand in awe of our ſelves, and afraid to ſin when we know beforehand that we muſt give ſo ſevere an account to our ſelves of every action.

And certainly it is a great piece of wiſdom to make up our accounts as frequently as we can, that our repentance may in ſome meaſure keep pace with the errors and failings of our lives, and that we may not be oppreſſed and confounded by the inſupportable weight of the ſins of a whole life falling upon us at once; and that perhaps at the very worſt time, when we are ſick and weak, and have neither underſtanding nor leiſure to recollect our ſelves, and to call our ſins diſtinctly to remembrance, much leſs to exerciſe any fit and proper acts of repentance for them. For there is nothing to be done in Religion when our Reaſon is once departed from us; then darkneſs hath overtaken us indeed, and *the night is come when no man can work.* But tho we were never ſo ſenſible and ſhould do all we can at that time, yet after all this how it will go with us God alone knows. I am ſure it is too much preſumption for any man to be confident that one general and confuſed act of repentance will ſerve his turn for the ſins of his whole life. Therefore there is great reaſon why we ſhould often examine our ſelves, both in order to the amendment of our lives, and the eaſe of our conſciences when we come to die.

2. This *thinking of our ways* may particularly and ſpecially refer to the ſins and miſcarriages of our lives: *I thought on my ways*, that is, I called my ſins to remembrance; I took a particular account of the errors of my life, and laid them ſeriouſly to heart; I conſidered all the circumſtances and conſequences of them, and all other things belonging to them; and reaſoning the matter throughly with my ſelf, came to a peremptory and fix'd reſolution of breaking off this wicked courſe of life, and betaking my ſelf to the obedience of God's Laws. And the *conſideration of our ways* taken in this ſenſe (which ſeems to be the more probable meaning of the words) may reaſonably imply in it theſe following particulars.

1. The taking of a particular account of our ſins, together with the ſeveral circumſtances and aggravations of them.
2. A hearty trouble and ſorrow for them; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid them ſadly to heart.
3. A ſerious conſideration of the evil and unreaſonableneſs of a ſinful courſe.
4. A due ſenſe of the fearful and fatal conſequences of a wicked life.
5. A full conviction of the neceſſity of quitting this courſe.
6. An apprehenſion of the poſſibility of doing this.

1. *The taking of a particular account of our ſins, together with the ſeveral circumſtances and aggravations of them.* And to this end we may do well to reflect particularly upon the ſeveral ſtages and periods of our lives, and to recollect at leaſt the principal miſcarriages belonging to each of them. And the better to enable us hereto it will be uſeful to have before our eyes ſome abridgment or ſummary of the Laws of God, containing the chief heads of our duties and ſins, of virtues and vices; For this will help to bring many of our faults and neglects to our remembrance, which otherwiſe perhaps would have been forgotten by us. We ſhould likewiſe conſider the ſeveral relations wherein we have ſtood to others, and how far we have tranſgreſſed or failed of our duty in any of theſe reſpects.

And having thus far made up our ſad account, we may in a great meaſure underſtand the number and greatneſs of our ſins; abating for ſome particulars which are ſlipp'd out of our memory, and for ſins of ignorance, and daily infirmities which are innumerable. By all which we may ſee what vile wretches and grievous offenders we have been; eſpecially if we take into conſideration the ſeveral heavy circumſtances of our ſins, which do above meaſure aggravate them; the heinouſneſs of many of them as to their nature, and the injurious conſequences of them to the perſon, or eſtate, or reputation of our neighbour; their having been committed againſt the clear knowledge of our duty, againſt the frequent checks and convictions of our conſciences, telling us when we did them that we did amiſs; againſt ſo many motions and ſuggeſtions of God's Holy Spirit, ſo many admonitions and reproofs from others; and contrary to our own moſt ſerious vows and reſolutions, renewed at ſeveral times, eſpecially upon the receiving of the bleſſed Sacrament, and in times of ſickneſs and diſtreſs: and all this notwithſtanding the plaineſt declarations of God's will to the contrary; notwithſtanding the terrors of the Lord and the wrath of God revealed from Heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men; notwithſtanding the cruel ſufferings of the Son of God for our ſins, and the moſt merciful offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood. Add to this the ſcandal of our wicked lives to our holy Religion, the ill example of them to the corrupting and debauching of others, the affront of them to the Divine authority,

thority, and the horrible ingratitude of them to the mercy and goodneſs and patience of God to which we have ſuch infinite obligations. Thus we ſhould ſet our ſins in order before our eyes with the ſeveral aggravations of them.

2. A hearty *trouble* and *ſorrow* for ſin; *I thought on my ways*, that is, I laid my ſins ſadly to heart. And ſurely whenever we remember the faults and follies of our lives we cannot but be inwardly touched and ſenſibly grieved at the thoughts of them; we cannot but hang down our heads, and ſmite upon our breaſts, and be in pain and heavineſs at our very hearts. I know that the tempers of men are very different, and therefore I do not ſay that tears are abſolutely neceſſary to repentance, but they do very well become it; and a thorough ſenſe of ſin will almoſt melt the moſt hard and obdurate diſpoſition, and fetch water out of a very rock. To be ſure the conſideration of our ways ſhould cauſe inward trouble and confuſion in our minds. The leaſt we can do when we have done amiſs is to be ſorry for it, to condemn our own folly, and to be full of indignation and diſpleaſure againſt our ſelves for what we have done, and to reſolve never to do the like again. And let us make ſure that our trouble and ſorrow for ſin have this effect, *to make us leave our ſins*; and then we ſhall need to be the leſs ſolicitous about the degrees and outward expreſſions of it.

3. *A ſerious conſideration of the evil and unreaſonableneſs of a ſinful courſe.* That ſin is the ſtain and blemiſh of our natures, the reproach of our reaſon and underſtanding, the diſeaſe and the deformity of our ſouls, the great enemy of our peace, the cauſe of all our fears and troubles: That whenever we do a wicked action we go contrary to the cleareſt dictates of our reaſon and conſcience, to our plain and true intereſt, and to the ſtrongeſt ties and obligations of duty and gratitude. And which renders it yet more unreaſonable, ſin is a voluntary evil which men wilfully bring upon themſelves. Other evils may be forced upon us, whether we will or no; but no man is wicked and vicious but by his own choice. How do we betray our folly and weakneſs by ſuffering our ſelves to be hurried away by every fooliſh luſt and paſſion to do things which we know to be prejudicial and hurtful to our ſelves: And ſo baſe and unworthy in themſelves that we are aſhamed to do them, not only in the preſence of a wiſe man, but even of a child or a fool? So that if ſin were followed with no other puniſhment beſides the guilt of having done a ſhameful thing, a man would not by intemperance make himſelf a fool and a beaſt; one would not be falſe and unjuſt, treacherous or unthankful, if for no other reaſon, yet out of mere greatneſs and generoſity of mind, out of reſpect to the dignity of his nature, and out of very reverence to his own reaſon and underſtanding. For let witty men ſay what they will in defence of their Vices, there are ſo many natural acknowledgments of the evil and unreaſonableneſs of ſin that the matter is paſt all denial: Men are generally galled and uneaſy at the thoughts of an evil action, both before and after they have committed it; they are aſhamed to be taken in a Crime, and heartily vexed and provoked whenever they are upbraided with it; and 'tis very obſervable, that tho the greater part of the world always was bad, and vice hath ever had more ſervants and followers to cry it up, yet never was there any Age ſo degenerate, in which Vice could get the better of Virtue in point of general eſteem and reputation: Even they whoſe wills have been moſt enſlaved to ſin, could never yet ſo far bribe and corrupt their underſtandings as to make them give full approbation to it.

4. *A due ſenſe of the fearful and fatal conſequences of a wicked life.* And theſe are ſo ſad and dreadful, and the danger of them ſo evident and ſo per-

petually threatning us, that no temptation can be ſufficient to excuſe a man to himſelf and his own reaſon for venturing upon them. A principal point of wiſdom is to look to the End of things; not only to conſider the preſent pleaſure and advantage of any thing, but alſo the ill conſequences of it for the future, and to balance them one againſt the other.

Now ſin in its own nature tends to make men miſerable. It certainly cauſes trouble and diſquiet of mind: And to a conſiderate man, that knows how to value the eaſe and ſatisfaction of his own mind, there cannot be a greater argument againſt ſin than to conſider that the forſaking of it is the only way to find reſt to our ſouls.

Beſides this, every vice is naturally attended with ſome particular miſchief and inconvenience, which maketh it even in this life a puniſhment to it ſelf; and commonly the providence of God and his juſt judgment upon Sinners ſtrikes in to heighten the miſchievous conſequences of a ſinful courſe. This we have repreſented in the Parable of the Prodigal; his riotous courſe of life did naturally and of it ſelf bring him to want, but the providence of God likewiſe concurred to render his condition more miſerable, *at the ſame time there aroſe a mighty Famine in the Land*; ſo that he did not only want wherewithal to ſupply himſelf, but was cut off from all hopes of relief from the abundance and ſuperfluity of others Sin brings many miſeries upon us, and God many times ſends more and greater than ſin brings; and the further we go on in a ſinful courſe, the more miſeries and the greater difficulties we involve our ſelves in.

But all theſe are but light and inconſiderable in compariſon of the dreadful miſeries of another World; to the danger whereof every man that lives a wicked life doth every moment expoſe himſelf: So that if we could conquer ſhame, and had ſtupidity enough to bear the infamy and reproach of our vices, and the upbraidings of our conſciences for them, and the temporal miſchiefs and inconveniences of them; tho for the preſent gratifying of our luſts we could brook and diſpenſe with all theſe, yet the conſideration of the end and iſſue of a ſinful courſe is an invincible objection againſt it and never to be anſwered; tho the violence of our ſenſual appetites and inclinations ſhould be able to bear down all temporal conſiderations whatſoever, yet methinks the intereſt of our everlaſting happineſs ſhould lye near our hearts; the conſideration of another world ſhould mightily amaze and ſtartle us; the horrors of eternal darkneſs and the diſmal thoughts of being miſerable for ever ſhould effectually diſcourage any man from a wicked life. And this danger continually threatens the ſinner, and may if God be not merciful to him happen to ſurprize him the next moment. And can we make too much haſte to fly from ſo great and apparent a danger? When will we think of ſaving our ſelves, if not when (for ought we know) we are upon the very brink of ruin, and juſt ready to drop into deſtruction?

5. Upon this naturally follows *a full conviction of the neceſſity of quitting this wicked courſe*. And neceſſity is always a powerful and over-ruling argument, and doth rather compel than perſuade: and after it is once evident leaves no place for further deliberation. And the greater the neceſſity is, it is ſtill the more cogent argument. For whatever is neceſſary is ſo in order to ſome end, and the greater the end the greater is the neceſſity of the means without which that end cannot be obtained. Now the chief and laſt end of all Reaſonable Creatures is happineſs, and therefore whatever is neceſſary in order to that hath the higheſt degree of rational and moral neceſſity. We are not capable of happineſs till we have left our ſins, *for without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.*

But tho men are convinced of this neceſſity, yet this doth not always enforce a preſent change; becauſe men hope they may continue in their ſins, and remedy all at laſt by repentance. But this is ſo great a hazard in all reſpects that there is no venturing upon it. And in matters of greateſt concernment wiſe men will run no hazards if they can help it. *David* was ſo ſenſible of this danger, that he would not defer his repentance and the change of his life for one moment; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies: I made haſte and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* *This* day, *this* hour for ought we know may be the laſt opportunity of making our peace with God. Therefore we ſhould make haſte out of this dangerous ſtate as *Lot* did out of *Sodom,* leſt fire and brimſtone overtake us. He that cannot promiſe himſelf the next moment hath a great deal of reaſon to ſeize upon the preſent opportunity. While we are *lingring* in our ſins, if God be not merciful to us we ſhall be conſumed. Therefore *make haſte* ſinner and *eſcape for thy life, leſt evil overtake thee.*

6. Laſtly, *An apprehenſion of the poſſibility of making this change.* God who deſigned us for happineſs at firſt, and after we had made a forfeiture of it by ſin was pleaſed to reſtore us again to the capacity of it by the Redemption of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour, hath made nothing neceſſary to our happineſs that is impoſſible for us to do, either of our ſelves, or by the aſſiſtance of that grace which he is ready to afford us if we heartily beg it of him. For that is poſſible to us which we may do by the aſſiſtance of another, if we may have that aſſiſtance for asking: And God hath promiſed to *give his holy Spirit to them that ask him.* So that notwithſtanding the great corruption and weakneſs of our natures, ſince the grace of God which brings ſalvation hath appeared, it is not abſolutely out of our power to leave our ſins and to turn to God: For that may truly be ſaid to be in our power which God hath promiſed to enable us to do, if we be not wanting to our ſelves.

So that there is nothing on God's part to hinder this change. He hath ſolemnly declared that he ſincerely deſires it, and that he is ready to aſſiſt our good reſolutions to this purpoſe. And moſt certainly when he tells us, that *he hath no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner, but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live*; that *he would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; that *he would not that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance:* He means plainly as he ſaith, and doth not ſpeak to us with any private reſerve or nice diſtinction between his ſecret and revealed will, that is, he doth not decree one thing and declare the contrary. So far is it from this, that if a ſinner entertain ſerious thoughts of returning to God and do but once move towards him, how ready is he to receive him! This is in a very lively manner deſcribed to us in the Parable of the *Prodigal Son,* who when he was returning home, and *was yet a great way off,* what haſte doth his Father make to meet him? *he ſaw him, and had compaſſion and ran.* And if there be no impediment on God's part, why ſhould there be any on ours? One would think all the doubt and difficulty ſhould be on the other ſide, Whether God would be pleaſed to ſhew mercy to ſuch great offenders as we have been. But the buſineſs doth not ſtick there. And will we be miſerable by our own choice, when the Grace of God hath put it into our power to be happy? I have done with the firſt thing, the courſe which *David* here took for the reforming of his life; *I thought on my ways.* I proceed to the

II. *The ſucceſs of this courſe.* It produced actual and ſpeedy reformation. *I turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies; I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy*

Commandments. And if we conſider the matter throughly and have but patience to reaſon out the caſe with our ſelves and to bring our thoughts and deliberations to ſome iſſue, the concluſion muſt naturally be the quitting of that evil and dangerous courſe in which we have lived. For ſin and conſideration cannot long dwell together. Did but men conſider what ſin is, they would have ſo many unanſwerable Objections againſt it, ſuch ſtrong fears and jealouſies of the miſerable iſſue and event of a wicked life, that they would not dare to continue any longer in it.

I do not ſay that this change is perfectly made at once. A ſtate of ſin and holineſs are not like two Ways that are juſt parted by a line, ſo as a man may ſtep out of the one full into the other; but they are like two Ways that lead to two very diſtant places, and conſequently are at a good diſtance from one another, and the farther any man hath travelled in the one the farther he is from the other; ſo that it requires time and pains to paſs from the one to the other; It ſometimes ſo happens, that ſome perſons are by a mighty conviction and reſolution, and by a very extraordinary and over-powering degree of God's grace, almoſt perfectly reclaimed from their ſins at once, and all of a ſudden *tranſlated out of the Kingdom of darkneſs into the kingdom of his dear Son*. And thus it was with many of the firſt Converts to Chriſtianity; as their prejudices againſt the Chriſtian Religion were ſtrong and violent, ſo the holy Spirit of God was pleaſed to work mightily in them that believed. But in the uſual and ſettled methods of God's grace evil habits are maſtered and ſubdued by degrees, and with a great deal of conflict, and many times after they are routed they rally and make head again; and 'tis a great while before the contrary habits of grace and virtue are grown up to any conſiderable degree of ſtrength and maturity, and before a man come to that confirm'd ſtate of goodneſs that he may be ſaid to have conquer'd and mortified his luſts. But yet this ought not to diſcourage us. For ſo ſoon as we have ſeriouſly begun this change we are in a good way, and all our endeavours will have the acceptance of good beginnings, and God will be ready to help us; and if we purſue our advantages we ſhall every day gain ground, and the work will grow eaſier upon our hands; and we who moved at firſt with ſo much ſlowneſs and difficulty, ſhall after a while be enabled to run the ways of God's commandments with pleaſure and delight.

I have done with the two things I propounded to ſpeak to from theſe words, This *courſe* here preſcribed, and the *ſucceſs* of it. And now to perſuade men to take this *courſe*, I ſhall offer two or three Arguments.

1. That Conſideration is the proper act of Reaſonable Creatures. This argument God himſelf uſes, to bring men to a conſideration of their evil ways, *Iſa*. 46. 8. *Remember, and ſhew your ſelves men*; *bring it again to mind, O ye tranſgreſſors*. To conſider our ways and to call our ſins to remembrance, is to ſhew our ſelves men. 'Tis the great fault and infelicity of a great many, that they generally live without thinking, and are acted by their preſent inclinations and appetites without any conſideration of the future conſequences of things, and without fear of any thing but of a preſent and ſenſible danger; like Brute Creatures, who fear no evils but what are in view and juſt ready to fall upon them: Whereas to a prudent and conſiderate man a good or evil in reverſion is capable of as true an eſtimation, proportionably to the greatneſs and diſtance of it, as if it were really preſent. And what do we think God has given us our reaſon and underſtandings for, but to foreſee evils at a diſtance, and to prevent them; to provide for our future ſecurity and happineſs, to look up *to God our Maker, who hath taught us more*

than the Beaſts of the earth, and made us wiſer than the Fowls of heaven; but to conſider what we do, and what we ought to do, and what makes moſt for our future and laſting intereſt, and what againſt it? What can a Beaſt do worſe than to act without any conſideration and deſign, than to purſue his preſent inclination without any apprehenſion of true danger? The moſt dull and ſtupid of all the brute Creatures can hardly exerciſe leſs reaſon than this comes to. So that for a man not to conſider his ways is to the very beſt intents and purpoſes to be *without underſtanding, and like the beaſts that periſh.*

2. This is the end of God's patience and long-ſuffering towards us, to bring us to conſideration. The great deſign of God's *goodneſs* is to *lead men to repentance. He winks at the ſins of men, that they may repent.* He bears long with us, and delays the puniſhment of our ſins, and doth not execute judgment ſpeedily, becauſe he is loth to ſurprize men into deſtruction; becauſe he would give them the liberty of ſecond thoughts, time to reflect upon themſelves, and to conſider what they have done, and to reaſon themſelves into repentance. *Conſider this all ye that forget God, leſt* his patience turn into fury, and *he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.*

3. Conſideration is that which we muſt all come to one time or other. Time will come when we ſhall conſider and cannot help it, when we ſhall not be able to divert our thoughts from thoſe things which we are now ſo loth to think upon. Our Conſciences will take their opportunity to bring our ways to remembrance, when ſome great calamity or affliction is upon us. Thus it was with the Prodigal, when he was brought to the very laſt extremity and *was ready to periſh with hunger*, then *he came to himſelf.* When we come to dye, then we ſhall think of our ways with trouble and vexation enough; And how glad would we then be that we had time to conſider them? And perhaps while we are wiſhing for more time Eternity will ſwallow us up. To be ſure in the other world, a great part of the miſery of wicked men will conſiſt in furious reflections upon themſelves and the evil actions of their lives. 'Tis ſaid of the *Rich* voluptuous man in the *Parable,* that *in hell he lift up his eyes being in torment*; as if he had never conſidered and bethought himſelf till that time. But alas! it will then be too late to conſider: For then conſideration will do us no good; it will ſerve to no other purpoſe but to aggravate our miſery, and to multiply our ſtings, and to give new life and rage to thoſe Vultures which will perpetually prey upon our hearts. But how much a wiſer courſe would it be to conſider theſe things in time, in order to our eternal peace and comfort; to think of them while we may redreſs them and avoid the diſmal conſequences of them, than when our caſe is deſperate and paſt remedy?

And now what can I ſay more to perſuade every one of us to a conſideration of our *own ways?* We are generally apt to buſy our ſelves in obſerving the errors and miſcarriages of our Neighbours, and are forward to mark and cenſure the faults and follies of other men; but how few deſcend into themſelvs, and turn their eyes inward, and ſay, *What have I done?* 'Tis an excellent ſaying of *Antoninus* the great *Emperor* and *Philoſopher*, *No man was ever unhappy for not prying into the actions and conditions of other men, but that man is neceſſarily unhappy who doth not obſerve himſelf, and conſider the ſtate of his own ſoul.*

This is our proper work; and *now* is a proper ſeaſon for it, when we pretend to God and men to ſet apart a ſolemn time for the examination of our ſelves, and for a ſerious review of our lives in order to humiliation and repentance, to the reforming and amendment of what is amiſs. And tho we would venture to diſſemble with men, yet let us not diſſemble with

God alſo; *For ſhall not he that pondereth the heart conſider it; and he that keepeth the ſoul, ſhall not he know it; and ſhall not he render to every man according to his ways?*

I know it is a very unpleaſant work which I am now putting you upon, and therefore no wonder that men are generally ſo backward to it; becauſe it will of neceſſity give ſome preſent diſturbance to their minds. They whoſe lives have been very vicious are ſo odious a ſight, ſo horrid a ſpectacle to themſelves, that they cannot endure to reflect upon their own ways; of all things in the world they hate Conſideration, and are ready to ſay to it as the evil Spirit did in the Goſpel to our Saviour, *What have I to do with thee? Art thou come to torment me before the time?* But let not this affright us from it; for whatever trouble it may cauſe at preſent, it is the only way to prevent the anguiſh and the torments of Eternity.

The things which I have offered to your conſideration are of huge moment and importance. They do not concern your bodies and eſtates, but that which is more truly your ſelves, your immortal ſouls, the deareſt and moſt durable part of your ſelves: and they do not concern us for a little while, but for ever. Let me therefore beſpeak your moſt ſerious regard to them in the words of *Moſes* to the people of *Iſrael*, after he had ſet the Law of God before them, together with the bleſſings promiſed to obedience, and the terrible Curſe threatned to the tranſgreſſion of it, *Deut.* 32. 46. *Set your hearts to the words which I teſtify to you this day, for it is not a vain thing, becauſe it is your life. Your life*, your *eternal life* and happineſs depends upon it.

And beſides a tender regard to your ſelves and your own intereſts, which methinks every man out of a natural deſire of being happy and dread of being miſerable ſhould be forward enough to conſider: Be pleaſed likewiſe to lay to heart the influence of your example upon others. I ſpeak now to a great many perſons, the eminence of whoſe rank and quality renders their examples ſo powerful as to be able almoſt to give authority either to Virtue or Vice. People take their faſhions from you, as to the habits of their minds as well as their bodies. So that upon you chiefly depends the ruin or reformation of manners, our hopes or deſpair of a better world. What way ſoever you go you are followed by troops. If you run any ſinful or dangerous courſe, you cannot *periſh alone in your iniquity*, but *thouſands will fall by your ſide, and ten thouſands at your right hands:* And on the contrary, 'tis very much in your power, and I hope in your wills and deſigns, to be the ſovereign reſtorers of Piety and Virtue to a degenerate Age. It is *our* part indeed to exhort men to their duty, but 'tis *you* that would be the powerful and effectual preachers of righteouſneſs. We may endeavour to make men proſelytes to virtue, but you would infallibly draw diſciples after you: We may try to perſuade, but you could certainly prevail, either to make men good, or to reſtrain them from being ſo bad.

Therefore conſider your ways, for the ſake of others as well as your ſelves. Conſider what you have done, and then conſider what is fit for you to do, and if you do it not, what will be the end of theſe things. And to help you forward in this work it is not neceſſary that I ſhould rip up the vices of the Age, and ſet mens ſins in order before them. It is much better that you your ſelves ſhould call your own ways to remembrance. We have every one a faithful Monitor and Witneſs in our own breaſts who, if we will but hearken to him, will deal impartially with us, and privately tell us the errors of our lives. To this Monitor I refer you, and to the grace of God to make theſe admonitions effectual.

Let us then every one of us, in the fear of God, *ſearch and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord.* Let us *take to our ſelves words, and ſay* to God with thoſe true Penitents in Scripture, *I have ſinned, what ſhall be done unto thee, O thou Preſerver of men? Behold, I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, I will abhor my ſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.* For *ſurely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I will not offend any more; that which I know not teach thou me, and if I have done iniquity I will do no more. O that there were ſuch an heart in us! O that we were wiſe, that we underſtood this, that we would conſider our latter end!* And God of his infinite mercy inſpire into every one of our hearts this holy and happy reſolution, for the ſake of our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all honour and glory now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XIV.

The Folly and Danger of Irreſolution and Delaying.

PSAL. CXIX. 56.

I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.

IN the words immediately going before you have the courſe which *David* took for the reforming of his life, and the ſucceſs of that courſe; *I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies.* A ſerious reflection upon the paſt errors and miſcarriages of his life produced the reformation of it. And you have a conſiderable circumſtance added in theſe words that I have now read to you, that this reformation was ſpeedy and without delay, *I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* Upon due conſideration of his former life, and a full conviction of the neceſſity of a change, he came to a reſolution of a better life, and immediately put this reſolution in execution; and to declare how preſently and quickly he did it he expreſſes it both affirmatively and negatively, after the manner of the *Hebrews,* who when they would ſay a thing with great certainty and *Emphaſis* are wont to expreſs it both ways, *I made haſte, and delayed not*; that is, I did with all imaginable ſpeed betake my ſelf to a better courſe.

And this is the natural effect of conſideration; and the true cauſe why men delay ſo neceſſary a work is, becauſe they ſtifle their reaſon and ſuffer themſelves to be hurried into the embraces of preſent Objects, and do not conſider their latter end and what will be the ſad iſſue and event of a wicked life. For if men would take an impartial view of their lives, and but now and then reflect upon themſelves and lay to heart the miſerable and fatal conſequences of a ſinful courſe, and think whither it will bring them at laſt, and that the end of theſe things will be death and miſery: If the carnal and ſenſual perſon would but look about him and conſider how many have been ruin'd in the way that he is in, how many lye *ſlain and wounded in it, that it is the way to hell, and leads down to the chambers of death,* this would certainly give a check to him and ſtop him in his courſe.

For it is not to be imagined but that *that* man who hath duly conſidered what ſin is, the ſhortneſs of its pleaſures and the eternity of its puniſhment, ſhould reſolve immediately to break off his ſins and to live another kind of life. Would any man be intemperate and walk after the fleſh, would any man be unjuſt or defraud or oppreſs his Neighbour, be prophane and live in the contempt of God and Religion, or allow himſelf in any wicked courſe whatſoever that conſiders and believes a Judgment to come, and that becauſe of theſe things the terrible vengeance of God will one day fall upon the Children of Diſobedience? It is not credible that men who apply themſelves ſeriouſly to the meditation of theſe matters ſhould venture to continue in ſo imprudent and dangerous a courſe, or could by any temptation whatſoever

ſoever be trained on one ſtep farther in a Way that does ſo certainly and viſibly lead to ruin and deſtruction.

So that my work at this time ſhall be, to endeavour to convince men of the monſtrous folly and unreaſonableneſs of delaying the reformation and amendment of their lives; and to perſuade us to reſolve upon it, and having reſolved, to ſet about it immediately and without delay; in imitation of the good man here in the Text, *I made haſte, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments.* And to this end, I ſhall

Firſt, Conſider the reaſons and excuſes which men pretend for delaying this neceſſary work, and ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of them.

Secondly, I ſhall add ſome farther Conſiderations to engage us effectually to ſet about this work ſpeedily and without delay.

I. We will conſider a little the reaſons and excuſes which men pretend for delaying this neceſſary work; and not only ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of them, but that they are each of them a ſtrong reaſon and powerful argument to the contrary.

1. Many pretend that they are abundantly convinced of the great neceſſity of leaving their ſins and betaking themſelves to a better courſe, and they fully intend to do ſo; only they cannot at preſent bring themſelves to it, but they hope hereafter to be in a better temper and diſpoſition, and then they reſolve by God's grace to ſet about this work in good earneſt, and to go through with it.

I know not whether it be fit to call this a Reaſon; I am ſure it is the greateſt cheat and deluſion that any man can put upon himſelf. For this plainly ſhews that thou doſt not intend to do this which thou art convinced is ſo neceſſary, but to put it off from day to day. For there is no greater evidence that a man doth not really intend to do a thing, than when notwithſtanding he ought upon all accounts and may in all reſpects better do it at preſent than hereafter, yet he ſtill puts it off. Whatever thou pretendeſt, this is a mere ſhift to get rid of a preſent trouble. It is like giving good words and making fair promiſes to a clamorous and importunate creditor, and appointing him to come another day, when the man knows in his conſcience that he intends not to pay him, and that he ſhall be leſs able to diſcharge the debt then, than he is at preſent. Whatever reaſons thou haſt againſt reforming thy life now will ſtill remain and be in as full force hereafter, nay probably ſtronger than they are at preſent. Thou art unwilling now, and ſo thou wilt be hereafter, and in all likelihood much more unwilling. So that this reaſon will every day improve upon thy hands, and have ſo much the more ſtrength by how much the longer thou continueſt in thy ſins. Thou haſt no reaſon in the world againſt the preſent time but only that 'tis *preſent*; why when hereafter comes to be preſent the reaſon will be juſt the ſame. So that thy preſent unwillingneſs is ſo far from being a juſt reaſon againſt it, that 'tis a good reaſon the other way; becauſe thou art unwilling now, and like to be ſo, nay more ſo hereafter; if thou intendeſt to do it at all thou ſhouldeſt ſet about it immediately, and without delay.

2. Another reaſon which men pretend for the delaying of this work is the great difficulty and unpleaſantneſs of it. And it cannot be denied but that there will be ſome bitterneſs and uneaſineſs in it, proportionably to the growth of evil habits, and the ſtrength of our luſts, and our greater or leſs progreſs and continuance in a ſinful courſe; So that we muſt make account of a ſharp conflict, of ſome pain and trouble in the making of this change, that it will coſt us ſome pangs and throws before we be born again. For

when nature hath been long bent another way, it is not to be expected that it ſhould be reduced and brought back to its firſt ſtraightneſs without pain and violence.

But then it is to be conſidered, that how difficult and painful ſoever this work be it is neceſſary, and that ſhould over-rule all other conſiderations whatſoever; that if we will not be at this pains and trouble, we muſt one time or other endure far greater than thoſe which we now ſeek to avoid; that it is not ſo difficult as we imagine, but our fears of it are greater than the trouble will prove; if we were but once reſolved upon the work, and ſeriouſly engaged in it, the greateſt part of the trouble were over; it is like the fear of children to go into the cold water, a faint trial increaſeth their fear and apprehenſion of it; but ſo ſoon as they have plunged into it the trouble is over, and then they wonder why they were ſo much afraid. The main difficulty and unpleaſantneſs is in our firſt entrance into Religion; it preſently grows tolerable, and ſoon after eaſie, and after that by degrees ſo pleaſant and delightful that the man would not for all the world return to his former evil ſtate and condition of life.

We ſhould conſider likewiſe what is the true cauſe of all this trouble and difficulty; 'Tis our long continuance in a ſinful courſe that hath made us ſo loth to leave it; 'Tis the cuſtom of ſinning that renders it ſo troubleſome and uneaſie to men to do otherwiſe: 'Tis the greatneſs of our guilt, heightned and inflamed by many and repeated provocations, that doth ſo gall our conſciences and fill our ſouls with ſo much terror: 'Tis becauſe we have gone ſo far in an evil way that our retreat is become ſo difficult, and becauſe we have delayed this work ſo long that we are now ſo unwilling to go about it; and conſequently, the longer we delay it the trouble and difficulty of a change will increaſe daily upon us. And all theſe conſiderations are ſo far from being a good reaſon for more delays, that they are a ſtrong argument to the contrary: Becauſe the work is difficult now, therefore do not make it more ſo; and becauſe your delays have increaſed the difficulty of it, and will do more and more, therefore delay no longer.

3. Another pretended encouragement to theſe delays is the great mercy and patience of God. He commonly bears longer with ſinners, and therefore there is no ſuch abſolute and urgent neceſſity of a ſpeedy repentance and reformation of our lives. Men have not the face to give this for a reaſon, but yet for all that it lies at the bottom of many mens hearts: So *Solomon* tells us, *Eccleſ.* 8. 11. *Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily, therefore the hearts of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil.*

But it is not always thus. There are few of us but have ſeen ſeveral inſtances of God's ſeverity to ſinners, and have known ſeveral perſons ſurprized by a ſudden hand of God, and cut off in the very act of ſin without having the leaſt reſpite given them, without time or liberty ſo much as to ask God forgiveneſs, and to conſider either what they had done, or whither they were going. And this may be the caſe of any ſinner, and is ſo much the more likely to be thy caſe, becauſe thou doſt ſo boldly preſume upon the mercy and patience of God.

But if it were always thus, and thou wert ſure to be ſpared yet a while longer; what can be more unreaſonable and diſingenuous than to reſolve to be evil becauſe God is good, and becauſe he ſuffers ſo long to ſin ſo much the longer, and becauſe he affords thee a ſpace of repentance therefore to delay it and put it off to the laſt? The proper deſign of God's goodneſs is to lead men to repentance, and he never intended his patience for an encouragement to men to continue in their ſins, but for an opportunity and an argument to break them off by repentance.

Theſe are the pretended reaſons and encouragements to men to delay their repentance and the reformation of their lives, and you ſee how groundleſs and unreaſonable they are; which was the *firſt* thing I propounded to ſpeak to.

II. I ſhall add ſome further conſiderations, to engage men effectually to ſet about this work ſpeedily, and without delay. And becauſe they are many I ſhall inſiſt upon thoſe which are moſt weighty and conſiderable, without being very curious and ſolicitous about the method and order of them: For provided they be but effectual to the end of perſuaſion, it matters not how inartificially they are ranged and diſpoſed.

1. Conſider, that in matters of great and neceſſary concernment, and which muſt be done, there is no greater argument of a weak and impotent mind than irreſolution, to be undetermin'd where the caſe is ſo plain and the neceſſity ſo urgent, to be always about doing that which we are convinced muſt be done.

Victuros agimus ſemper, nec vivimus unquam.

We are always intending to live a new life, but can never find a time to ſet about it. This is as if a man ſhould put off eating and drinking and ſleeping from one day and night to another, till he have ſtarved and deſtroyed himſelf. It ſeldom falls under any man's deliberation whether he ſhould live or not, if he can chuſe; and if he cannot chuſe, 'tis in vain to deliberate about it. It is much more abſurd to deliberate whether we ſhould live virtuouſly or religiouſly, ſoberly or righteouſly in the world, for that upon the matter is to conſult whether a man ſhould be happy or not; Nature hath determined this for us, and we need not reaſon about it; and conſequently, we ought not to delay that which we are convinced is ſo neceſſary in order to it.

2. Conſider that Religion is a great and a long work, and asks ſo much time that there is none left for the delaying of it. To begin with Repentance, which is commonly our firſt entrance into Religion; This alone is a great work, and is not only the buſineſs of a ſudden thought and reſolution but of execution and action: 'Tis the abandoning of a ſinful courſe, which we cannot leave till we have in ſome degree maſtered our luſts; for ſo long as they are our Maſters, like *Pharaoh*, they will keep us in bondage and *not let us go to ſerve the Lord.* The habits of ſin and vice are not to be plucked up and caſt off at once; as they have been long in contracting, ſo without a miracle it will require a competent time to ſubdue them and get the victory over them; for they are conquered juſt by the ſame degrees that the habits of grace and virtue grow up and get ſtrength in us.

So that there are ſeveral duties to be done in Religion, and often to be repeated; many graces and virtues are to be long practiſed and exerciſed before the contrary vices will be ſubdued, and before we arrive to a confirmed and ſettled ſtate of goodneſs; ſuch a ſtate as can only give us a clear and comfortable evidence of the ſincerity of our reſolution and repentance, and of our good condition towards God. We have many luſts to mortify, many paſſions to govern and bring into order, much good to do, to make what amends and reparation we can for the much evil we have done: We have many things to learn; and many to unlearn, to which we ſhall be ſtrongly prompted by the corrupt inclinations of our nature, and the remaining power of ill habits and cuſtoms: and perhaps we have ſatisfaction and reſtitution to make for the many injuries we have done to others, in their perſons, or eſtates, or reputations: In a word, we have a *body of ſin* to put off, which clings cloſe to us and is hard to part with: we have to *cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, and to perfect holineſs in the fear of God*; to increaſe and improve our graces and virtues; to *add to our faith knowledge*, and *temperance*, and *patience*, and *brotherly kindneſs*, and *charity*; and *to abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt to the praiſe and glory of God:* We have to be uſeful to the world, and exemplary to others in a holy and virtuous converſation; our *light is ſo to ſhine before men, that others may ſee our good works, and glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*

And do we think all this is to be done in an inſtant, and requires no time? That we may delay and put off to the laſt, and yet do all this work well enough? Do we think we can do all this in time of ſickneſs and old age, when we are not fit to do any thing; when *the ſpirit of a man* can hardly *bear the infirmities* of nature, much leſs a guilty conſcience and *a wounded ſpirit?* Do we think that when the day hath been idly ſpent and ſquandred away by us, that we ſhall be fit to work when the night and darkneſs comes? When our underſtanding is weak, and our memory frail, and our will crooked, and by a long cuſtom of ſinning obſtinately bent the wrong way, what can we then do in Religion? what reaſonable or acceptable ſervice can we then perform to God? When our candle is juſt ſinking into the ſocket, how ſhall *our light ſo ſhine before men, that others may ſee our good works?*

Alas! the longeſt life is no more than ſufficient for a man to reform himſelf in, to repent of the errors of his life, and to amend what is amiſs: to put our ſouls into a good poſture and preparation for another world, to train up our ſelves for eternity, and to make our ſelves *meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light.*

3. Conſider what a deſperate hazard we run by theſe delays. Every delay of repentance is a venturing the main chance. It is uncertain whether hereafter we ſhall have time for it, and if we have time whether we ſhall have a heart to it, and the aſſiſtance of God's grace to go thorough with it. God indeed hath been graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe pardon to repentance; but he hath no where promiſed life and leiſure, the aids of his grace and holy Spirit to thoſe who put off their repentance; he hath no where promiſed acceptance to mere ſorrow and trouble for ſin, without *fruits meet for repentance, and amendment of life:* He hath no where promiſed to receive them to mercy and favour who only give him good words, and are at laſt contented to condeſcend ſo far to him as to promiſe to leave their ſins when they can keep them no longer. Many have gone thus far in times of affliction and ſickneſs, as to be awakened to a great ſenſe of their ſins, and to be mightily troubled for their wicked lives, and to make ſolemn promiſes and profeſſions of becoming better; and yet upon their deliverance and recovery all hath vaniſhed and come to nothing, and their *righteouſneſs hath been as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which paſſeth away:* And why ſhould any man, merely upon account of a death-bed repentance, reckon himſelf in a better condition than thoſe perſons who have done as much and gone as far as he; and there is no other difference between them but this, that the repentance of the former was tried and proved inſincere, but the *death-bed repentance* never came to a trial; and yet for all that God knows whether it were ſincere or not, and how it would have proved if the man had lived longer. Why ſhould any man for offering up to God the meer refuſe and dregs of his life, and the days *which himſelf hath no pleaſure in,* expect to receive the reward of eternal life and happineſs at his hands?

But tho we do not deſign to delay this work ſo long, yet ought we to conſider that all delays in a matter of this conſequence are extremely dangerous; becauſe we put off a buſineſs of the greateſt concernment to the future, and in ſo doing put it to the hazard whether ever it ſhall be done: For the future is as much out of our power to command, as it is to call back the time which is paſt. Indeed if we could arreſt time and ſtrike off the nimble wheels of his Chariot, and like *Joſhua* bid the Sun ſtand ſtill, and make opportunity tarry as long as he had occaſion for it; this were ſomething to excuſe our delay, or at leaſt to mitigate or abate the folly and unreaſonableneſs of it: But this we cannot do. It is in our power, under the influence of God's grace and holy Spirit, to amend our lives now, but it is not in our power to live till to morrow; and who will part with an eſtate in hand, which he may preſently enter upon the poſſeſſion of, for an uncertain reverſion; and yet thus we deal in the great and everlaſting concernments of our ſouls; we trifle away the preſent opportunities of ſalvation, and vainly promiſe to our ſelves the future; we let go that which is in our power, and fondly diſpoſe of that which is out of our power, and in the hands of God.

Lay hold then upon the preſent opportunities, and look upon every action thou doſt, and every opportunity of doing any, as poſſibly thy laſt; for ſo it may prove, for any thing thou canſt tell to the contrary. If a man's life lay at ſtake and he had but one throw for it, with what care and with what concernment would he manage that action? What thou art doing next may, for ought thou knoweſt, be for thy life and for all eternity. So much of thy life is moſt certainly paſt, and God knows thou haſt yet done little or nothing towards the ſecuring of thy future happpineſs: It is not certain how much or how little is remaining, therefore be ſure to make the beſt uſe of that little which may be left, and wiſely to manage the laſt ſtake.

4. Seeing the delay of Repentance doth mainly rely upon the hopes and encouragement of a future repentance, let us conſider a little how unreaſonable theſe hopes are, and how abſurd the encouragement is which men take from them. To ſin in hopes that hereafter we ſhall repent, is to do a thing in hopes that we ſhall one day be mightily aſhamed of it, that we ſhall one time or other be heartily grieved and troubled that we have done it: It is to do a thing in hopes that we ſhall afterwards condemn our ſelves for it, and wiſh a thouſand times we had never done it; in hopes that we ſhall be full of horror at the thoughts of what we have done, and ſhall treaſure up ſo much guilt in our conſciences as will make us a terror to our ſelves, and be ready to drive us even to deſpair and diſtraction. And is this a reaſonable hope? Is this a fitting encouragement for a wiſe man to give to himſelf, to any action? And yet this is plainly the true meaning of mens going on in their ſins, in hopes that hereafter they ſhall repent of them.

5. If you be ſtill reſolved to delay this buſineſs and put it off at preſent, conſider well with your ſelves how long you intend to delay it. I hope not to the laſt, nor till ſickneſs come and death make his approaches to you. This is next to madneſs to venture all upon ſuch an after-game. 'Tis juſt as if a man ſhould be content to be ſhipwrack'd, in hope that he ſhall afterwards eſcape by a plank and get ſafe to ſhore. But I hope none are ſo unreaſonable, yet I fear that many have a mind to put it off to old age, tho they do not care to ſay ſo. *Seneca* expoſtulates excellently with this ſort of men; *Who ſhall enſure thy life till that time? Who ſhall paſs his word for thee, that the providence of God will ſuffer all things to happen and fall out juſt as thou*

haſt deſigned and forecaſt them? Art thou not aſhamed to reſerve the relicks of thy life for thy ſelf, and to ſet apart only that time to be wiſe and virtuous in which is good for nothing? How late is it then to begin to live well when thy life is almoſt at an end? What a ſtupid forgetfulneſs is it of our mortality, to put off good reſolutions to the fiftieth or ſixtieth year of our age, and reſolve to begin to do better at that *time of life to which very few perſons have reach'd?*

But perhaps thou art not altogether ſo unreaſonable, but deſireſt only to reſpite this work till the firſt heat of youth and luſt be over, till the cooler and more conſiderate part of thy life come on; *that* perhaps thou thinkeſt may be the fitteſt and moſt convenient ſeaſon. But ſtill we reckon upon uncertainties, for perhaps that ſeaſon may never be: However, to be ſure it is much more in our power, by the aſſiſtance of God's grace which is never wanting to the ſincere endeavours of men, to conquer our luſts now, and to reſiſt the moſt heady and violent temptations to vice, than either to ſecure the future time, or to recover that which is once paſt and gone.

Some ſeem yet more reaſonable, and are content to come lower, and deſire only to put it off for a very little while. But why for a little while? Why till to morrow? To morrow will be as this day, only with this difference, that thou wilt in all probability be more unwilling and indiſpoſed *then*.

So that there is no *future* time which any man can reaſonably pitch upon. All delay in this caſe is dangerous, and as ſenſleſs as the expectation of the *Idiot* deſcribed by the *Poet*, who being come to the river ſide and intending to paſs over, ſtays till all the water in the river be gone by and hath left the channel a dry paſſage for him.

——— at ille
Labitur, & labetur in omne volubilis ævum.

But the river runs, and runs, and will run, and if he ſhould ſtay a thouſand years will never be the nearer being dry. So that if the man muſt go over, and there be neceſſity for it, (as there is for Repentance) the only wiſe reſolution to be taken in this caſe, is to wade or ſwim over as well as he can, becauſe the matter will never be amended by tarrying.

6. *Laſtly*, Conſider what an unſpeakable happineſs it is to have our minds ſettled in that condition, that we may without fear and amazement, nay with comfort and confidence expect death and judgment. Death is never far from any of us, and the general Judgment of the world may be nearer than we are aware of; for *of that day and hour knoweth no man.* And theſe are two terrible things, and nothing can free us from the terror of them but a good conſcience, and a good conſcience is only to be had either by innocence, or by repentance and amendment of life. Happy man! who by this means is at peace with God, and with himſelf; and can think of death and judgment without dread and aſtoniſhment. For *the ſting of death is ſin*; and the terror of the great day only concerns thoſe who have lived wickedly and impenitently, and would not be perſuaded, neither by the mercies of God, nor by the fear of his judgments, to repent and turn to him: But if we have truly forſaken our ſins, and do ſincerely endeavour to live in obedience to the Laws and Commands of God, the more we think of death and judgment the greater matter of joy and comfort will theſe things be to us: For *bleſſed is that ſervant, whom his Lord when he comes ſhall find ſo doing.* Let us therefore as ſoon as poſſibly we can put our ſelves into this poſture and preparation, according to that advice of our bleſſed Saviour, Luke 12. 35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye your ſelves like unto men that wait for their Lord.*

And now I hope that euough hath been ſaid to convince men of the great unreaſonableneſs and folly of theſe delays, nay I believe that moſt men are convinced of it by their own thoughts, and that their conſciences call them fools a thouſand times for it: But O that I knew what to ſay that might prevail with men and effectually perſuade them to do that which they are ſo abundantly convinced is ſo neceſſary.

And here I might addreſs my ſelf to the ſeveral ages of perſons. You that are *young*, and have hitherto been in a good meaſure innocent, may prevent the Devil, and by an early piety give God the firſt poſſeſſion of your ſouls; and by this means never be put to the trouble of ſo great and ſolemn a repentance, having never been deeply engaged in a wicked life: You may do a glorious, I had almoſt ſaid a meritorious thing, in cleaving ſtedfaſtly to God and reſolving to ſerve him, when you are ſo importunately courted and ſo hotly aſſaulted by the Devil and the World. However, you may not live to be old; therefore upon that conſideration begin the work preſently, and make uſe of the opportunity that is now in your hands.

You that are grown up to *ripeneſs of years* and are in the full vigor of your age, *you* are to be put in mind that the heat and inconſiderateneſs of youth is now paſt and gone, that reaſon and conſideration are now in their perfection and ſtrength, that this is the very age of prudence and diſcretion, of wiſdom and warineſs: So that now is the proper time for you to be ſerious, and wiſely to ſecure your future happineſs.

As for thoſe that are *old*, *they* methinks ſhould need no body to admoniſh them, that it is now high time for them to begin a new life, and that the time paſt of their lives is too much to have ſpent in ſin and folly. There is no trifling where men have a great work to do, and but little time to do it in. Your Sun is certainly going down and near its ſetting, therefore you ſhould quicken your pace, conſidering that your journey is never the ſhorter becauſe you have but little time to perform it in. Alas man! thou art juſt ready to dye, and haſt thou not yet begun to live? Are thy paſſions and luſts yet unſubdued, and have they had no other mortification than what age hath given them? 'Tis ſtrange to ſee how in the very extremities of old age, many men are as if they had ſtill a thouſand years to live, and make no preparation for death, tho it dogs them at the heels and is juſt come up to them and ready to give them the fatal ſtroke.

Therefore let us not put off this neceſſary work of reforming our ſelves, in what part and age of our lives ſoever we be. *To day whilſt it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* Nay to day is with the lateſt to begin this work, had we been wiſe we would have begun it ſooner. 'Tis God's infinite mercy to us that it is not quite too late, that the day of God's patience is not quite expired, and the door ſhut againſt us. Therefore do not defer your repentance to the next ſolemn time, to the next occaſion of receiving the bleſſed Sacrament: Do not ſay I will then reform and become a new man, after *that* I will take leave of my luſts and ſin no more. For let us make what haſte we can we cannot poſſibly make too much.

——*properat vivere nemo ſatis.*

No man makes haſte enough to be good, to *ceaſe to do evil, and to learn to do well.* Be as quick as we will life will be too nimble for us, and go on faſter than our work does, and death will go nigh to prevent us and ſurprize us unawares.

Do, do, *ſinner*; abuſe and neglect thy ſelf yet a little while longer, till the time of regarding thy ſoul and working out thy own ſalvation be at an end, and all the opportunities of minding that great concernment be ſlipped out of thy hands, never to be recovered, never to be called back again; no, not by thy moſt earneſt wiſhes and deſires, by thy moſt fervent prayers and tears; and thou be brought into the condition of *prophane Eſau*, who for once deſpiſing the Bleſſing loſt it for ever, *and found no place of repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears.*

To conclude: Art thou convinced that thy eternal happineſs depends upon following the advice which hath now been given thee? Why then do but behave thy ſelf in this caſe, as thou and all prudent men are wont to do in matters which thou canſt not but acknowledge to be of far leſs concernment. If a man be travelling to ſuch a place, ſo ſoon as he finds himſelf out of the way he preſently ſtops and makes towards the right way, and hath no inclination to go wrong any further: If a man be ſick he will be well preſently if he can, and not put it off to the future: Moſt men will gladly take the firſt opportunity that preſents it ſelf, of being rich or great; every man almoſt catches at the very firſt offers of a great place or a good purchaſe and ſecures them preſently if he can, leſt the opportunity be gone and another ſnatch theſe things from him. Do thou thus ſo much more in matter ſo much greater. Return from the error of thy way, be well, ſave thy ſelf, as ſoon as poſſibly thou canſt. When happineſs preſents it ſelf to thee do not turn it off, and bid it come again to morrow. Perhaps thou mayeſt never be ſo fairly offered again, perhaps the day of ſalvation may not come again to morrow, nay perhaps to *thee* to morrow may never come. But if we were ſure that happineſs would come again, yet why ſhould we put it off? Does any man know how to be ſafe and happy to day, and can he find in his heart to tarry till to morrow?

Now the God of all mercy and patience give every one of us the wiſdom and grace to *know* and to do, *in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes*; for the ſake of our bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all honour and glory now and for ever,* Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

The diſtinguiſhing Character of a Good and a Bad Man.

1 JOHN III. 10.

In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.

IT is certainly a matter of the greateſt conſequence to us, both in order to our preſent peace and future happineſs, truly to underſtand our ſpiritual ſtate and condition, and whether we belong to God and be his Children or not. And it is not ſo difficult as is commonly imagined to arrive at this knowledge, if we have a mind to it, and will but deal impartially with our ſelves; for the Text gives us a plain mark and character whereby we may know it, *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.*

From which words I ſhall endeavour by God's aſſiſtance to lay men open to themſelves, and to repreſent to every one of us the truth of our condition; and then leave it to the grace of God, and every man's ſerious conſideration, to make the beſt uſe of it.

And it will conduce very much to the clearing of this matter to conſider briefly the occaſion of theſe words. And this will beſt appear by attending ſtedfaſtly to the main ſcope and deſign of this *Epiſtle*. And I think that no man that reads it with attention can doubt but that it is particularly deſigned againſt the impious Sect of the *Gnoſticks*, who, as the *Fathers* tell us, ſprang from *Simon Magus*, and pretended to extraordinary knowledge and illumination, from whence they had the name of *Gnoſticks*; but notwithſtanding this glittering pretence they did allow themſelves in all manner of impious and vicious practices, *turning the grace of God into laſciviouſneſs*, as St. *Jude* ſpeaks of them. And that St. *John* aims particularly at this ſort of men is very evident from the frequent and plain alluſions throughout this *Epiſtle* to thoſe Names and Titles which this Sect aſſumed to themſelves, as Chap. 2. ver. 4. *He that ſaith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* And *verſe* 9. *He that ſaith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkneſs even until now.* Which paſſages, and many more in this *Epiſtle*, do plainly refer to the pretences of this *Sect* to more than ordinary *knowledge* and *illumination* in the myſteries of Religion; notwithſtanding they did ſo notoriouſly contradict theſe glorious pretences by the impieties of their lives, and particularly by their hatred and enmity to their Fellow-Chriſtians. For, as the *ancient Fathers* tell us, they pretended that whatever they did they could not ſin. And this our *Apoſtle* intimates in the beginning of this *Epiſtle*, *If we ſay that we have no ſin we de-*

ceive our ſelves, and the truth is not in us. And they held it lawful to renounce Chriſtianity to avoid perſecution; and not only ſo but alſo to join with the Heathen in perſecuting the Chriſtians; which ſeems to be the reaſon why the *Apoſtle* ſo often taxeth them *for hatred to their Brethren,* and calls them *Murtherers.*

Now to ſhew the inconſiſtence of theſe principles and practices with Chriſtianity the Apoſtle uſeth many arguments, amongſt which he particularly inſiſteth upon this, That nothing is more eſſential to a *Diſciple of Chriſt* and a *Child of God* (by which Titles Chriſtians were commonly known) than to abſtain from the practice of all ſin and wickedneſs; *ver.* 6. of this *chap. Whoſoever abideth in him ſinneth* not; *whoſoever ſinneth hath not ſeen him, neither known him,* (whatever knowledge they might pretend to, it was evident they were deſtitute of the true knowledge of God and his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*) and *verſe* 7. *Little Children, let no man deceive you*; *he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as he is righteous*; and *ver.* 8. *He that committeth ſin is of the Devil*; and *verſe* 9. *Whoſoever is born of God doth not commit ſin*; let men pretend what they will, wickedneſs is a plain mark and character of one that belongs to the *Devil*; as on the contrary righteouſneſs is an evidence of a *Child of God*: *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil,* &c.

I ſhall briefly explain the words, and then conſider the matter contained in them.

By the children of God, and the children of the Devil, are meant good and bad men; it being uſual in the phraſe of Scripture to call perſons or things which partake of ſuch a nature or quality, the children of thoſe who are eminently endued with that nature and diſpoſition. Thus they who are of the faith of *Abraham,* and do the works of *Abraham,* are called *Abraham's children*: In like manner thoſe who in their diſpoſitions and actions imitate God are called *the children of God*; and on the contrary thoſe that addict themſelves to ſin and impiety are counted of another race and deſcent, they reſemble the Devil and belong to him as the Chief and Head of that Faction.

By *righteouſneſs* is here meant univerſal goodneſs and conformity to the Law of God, in oppoſition to ſin which is the tranſgreſſion of that Law.

By being *manifeſt* is meant that hereby good and bad men are really diſtinguiſhed, ſo that every one that will examine his condition by this mark may know of which number he is, and to what Party he belongs.

I come now to the main argument contained in the words, which is to give us a certain character and mark of diſtinction between a good and bad man; ἐν τούτῳ, *by this the children of God are manifeſt and the children of the Devil*; *whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.*

In the management of the following Diſcourſe I ſhall proceed in this method.

Firſt, We will conſider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man which is here laid down, *Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.*

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that by this mark every man may, with due care and diligence, come to the knowledge of his ſpiritual ſtate and condition. *By this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil.*

Thirdly, I ſhall enquire whence it comes to paſs, that notwithſtanding this ſo many perſons are at ſo great uncertainty concerning their condition.

I. We will conſider the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man, which is here in the Text, *Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God*; which implies likewiſe on the contrary, that *whoſoever doth righteouſneſs is of God.* Now in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of this phraſe, he only who lives in all the commandments of God blameleſs can be ſaid to *do righteouſneſs*; But in this ſenſe *there is none that doth righteouſneſs, no, not one*; and conſequently none could be the Children of God; but the Text ſuppoſes ſome to be ſo, and therefore by *doing righteouſneſs* the *Apoſtle* muſt neceſſarily be underſtood to mean ſomething that is ſhort of perfect and unſinning obedience. So that the queſtion is, What *doing of righteouſneſs* is ſufficient to denominate a man a *Child of God*, and to put him into a ſtate of grace and favour with Him?

And I do not intend nicely to ſtate this matter. 'Tis not perhaps poſſible to be done, nothing being more difficult than to determine the very utmoſt bounds and limits of things, and to tell exactly and juſt to a point where the line of difference between Virtue and Vice, between the ſtate of a good and bad man, is to be placed: And if it could be done, it would be of no great uſe; for I take it to be no part of my buſineſs to tell men how many faults they may have, and how little goodneſs, and yet be *the children of God:* but rather to acquaint them what degrees of holineſs and goodneſs are neceſſary to give men a clear and comfortable evidence of their good eſtates towards God, and then to perſuade them in order to their peace and aſſurance to endeavour after ſuch degrees.

Wherefore to ſtate the buſineſs ſo far as is neceſſary to give men a ſufficient knowledge of their condition, I ſhall briefly conſider who they are that in the Apoſtle's ſenſe may be ſaid to be *doers of righteouſneſs*, or *not doers of it.* And becauſe the *Apoſtle* lays down the Rule negatively, I ſhall therefore

In the *firſt* place, enquire who they are that in the *Apoſtle*'s ſenſe may be ſaid *not to do righteouſneſs.*

1. They that live in the general courſe of a wicked life, in the practice of great and known ſins, as injuſtice, intemperance, filthy and ſenſual luſts, prophane neglect and contempt of God and Religion, ſo that by the whole courſe and tenor of their actions it is plain beyond all denial that *there is no fear of God before their eyes.* Concerning theſe the caſe is ſo very evident that it ſeems too mild and gentle an expreſſion to call them *not doers of righteouſneſs.*

2. They who live in the habitual practice of any one known ſin, or in the neglect of any conſiderable part of their known duty. For any vicious habit denominates a man, and puts him into an evil ſtate.

3. They who are guilty of the ſingle act of a very heinous and notorious crime; as a deliberate act of blaſphemy, of murther, perjury, fraud or oppreſſion, or of any other crime of the like enormity. For tho ordinarily one ſingle act of ſin doth not denominate one a bad man, when the general courſe of the man's life is contrary; yet the ſingle acts of ſome ſorts of ſins are ſo crying and heinous, and do ſo ſtare every man's conſcience in the face, that they are juſtly eſteemed to be of equal malignity with vicious habits of an inferior kind; becauſe they do almoſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe a great depravation of mind, and a monſtrous alienation from God and goodneſs in the perſon that deliberately commits them. And they who are guilty in any of theſe three degrees now mentioned are moſt certainly *not doers of righteouſneſs*, and conſequently it is *manifeſt* that they are not *the children of God.*

In the *ſecond* place, I ſhall enquire who they are that in the *Apoſtles* ſenſe may be ſaid to *do righteouſneſs.* In ſhort, they who in the general courſe of their lives do keep the Commandments of God. And thus the *Scripture* generally expreſſeth this matter, by *keeping the Commandments of God*, and by *having reſpect to all his Commandments*; by *obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt*; by being *holy in all manner of converſation*; by *abſtaining from all kind of evil*; by *cleanſing our ſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit*; and by *practiſing holineſs in the fear of God*: To which I ſhall add the deſcription which St. *Luke* gives us of the *righteouſneſs* of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, Luke 1. 6. *They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs.* All which expreſſions do plainly ſignify the actual conformity of our lives and actions in the general courſe and tenor of them, to the Laws and Commands of God. And this implies theſe two things; That *the tenor of our lives and actions be agreeable to theſe Laws of God*: And that *theſe actions be done with a ſincere and upright mind*; out of regard to God and another world, and not for low and temporal ends.

And I chuſe rather to deſcribe a righteous man by the actual conformity of the general courſe of his actions to the Law of God, than (as ſome have done) by a ſincere deſire or reſolution of obedience. For a deſire may be ſincere for the time it laſts, and yet vaniſh before it comes to any real effect. And how innocently ſoever it was intended it is certainly a great miſtake in Divinity, and of very dangerous conſequence to the ſouls of men, to affirm that a deſire of grace is grace; and conſequently by the ſame reaſon, that a deſire of obedience is obedience. A ſincere deſire and reſolution to be good is indeed a good beginning, and ought by all means to be cheriſhed and encouraged; but yet it is far enough from being the thing deſired, or from being accepted for it in the eſteem of God: For God never accepts the deſire for the deed, but where there is no poſſibility, no opportunity of doing the thing deſired; but if there be, and the thing be not done, there is no reaſon to imagine that the deſire in that caſe ſhould be accepted as if the thing were done. For inſtance, if a man give alms according to his ability, and would give more if he were able, in this caſe the deſire is accepted for the deed. And of this caſe it is and no other that the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 8. 12. *If there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* That is, God interprets and accepts the charity of men according to the largeneſs of their hearts, and not according to the ſtraitneſs of their fortunes: But it is a great miſtake to draw a general concluſion from this Text, that in all caſes God accepts the will for the deed. For though a man ſincerely deſire and reſolve to reform his life (as I doubt not many men often do) but do it not when there is time and opportunity for it, theſe deſires and reſolutions are of no account with God; all this *righteouſneſs is but as the morning cloud, and as the early dew which paſſeth away.* Men are not apt to miſtake ſo groſly in other matters. No man believes hunger to be meat, or thirſt to be drink; and yet there is no doubt of the truth and ſincerity of theſe natural deſires. No man thinks that covetouſneſs or a greedy deſire to be rich is an eſtate, or that ambition or an inſatiable deſire of honour is really advancement: Juſt ſo, and no otherwiſe, a deſire to be good is righteouſneſs. The *Apoſtle*'s caution a little before the Text may fitly be applied to this purpoſe, *Little children, let no man deceive you*: *He that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as he is righteous.* Not but that the beſt of men do ſometimes fall through infirmity, and are betrayed by ſurprize, and born down by the violence of temptation; but if the general courſe of our actions be a *doing of righteouſneſs*, the grace of the Goſpel, in and through the merits of our bleſſed Saviour, doth accept of this imperfect but ſincere obedience.

II. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that by this mark every man may with due care and diligence, arrive at the certain knowledge of his ſpiritual ſtate and condition. *By this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil: Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.* By which the *Apoſtle* means that this is a real mark of difference betwixt good and bad men, and that whereby they very often manifeſt themſelves to others; eſpecially when the courſe of their lives is eminently pious and virtuous, or notoriouſly impious and wicked. But becauſe it doth not ſo much concern us curiouſly to enquire into, much leſs ſeverely to cenſure the ſtate of other men, I ſhall only conſider at preſent how far by this mark and character every man may make a certain judgment of his own good and bad condition.

1. By this character, as I have explained it, he that is a bad man may certainly know himſelf to be ſo, if he will but conſider his condition, and do not wilfully deceive and delude himſelf. As for thoſe who are vicious in the general courſe of their lives, or have been guilty of the act of ſome heinous or notorious ſin not yet repented of; their caſe is ſo plain for the moſt part, even to themſelves, that they can have no manner of doubt concerning it. Such men ſtand continually convicted and condemned by the ſentence of their own minds: and whenever they reflect upon themſelves (which they do as ſeldom as they can) they are a *terror to themſelves*, and full of amazement and fearful expectation of judgment. Not but that even in ſo plain a caſe many men do uſe great endeavours to cheat themſelves, and would be very glad to find out ways to reconcile a wicked life with the hopes of heaven, and to gain the favour, at leaſt the forgiveneſs of God, without repentance and amendment of their lives. And to this end they are willing to confeſs their ſins, and to undergo any Penance that ſhould be impoſed upon them, that only excepted which only can do them good, I mean, real reformation. And when the Prieſt hath abſolv'd them, they would fain believe that God hath forgiven them too; however, they return to their former courſe, and being ſtrongly addicted to their luſts, between ſtupidity and fooliſh hopes they at laſt come to this deſperate reſolution to venture all upon the abſolution of the Prieſt, *Et valeat quantum valere poteſt*, let it have what effect it can; tho I dare ſay that in their moſt ſerious thoughts they are horribly afraid it will do them no good.

And for thoſe who are ſinners of a leſſer rate, and perhaps allow themſelves only in one kind of vice, they likewiſe have reaſon to conclude themſelves in a bad condition; eſpecially if they conſider that he who lives in the breach of any one Commandment of God is guilty of all, becauſe he contemns that authority which enacted the whole Law. And 'tis eaſy for any man to diſcern the habit of any ſin in himſelf; as when he frequently commits it, when he takes up no firm reſolutions againſt it, when he uſeth no competent care to avoid the temptations to it, nor puts forth any vigorous endeavours to break off from it; or however, ſtill continues in the practice of it. For the cuſtomary practice of any known ſin is utterly inconſiſtent with ſincere reſolutions and endeavours againſt it, there being no greater evidence of the inſincerity of reſolutions and endeavours in any kind than ſtill to go on to do contrary to them.

2. By this character likewiſe they that are ſincerely good may generally be well aſſured of their good condition, and that they are *the children of*

God. And there are but two things neceſſary to evidence this to them; That the general courſe and tenor of their actions be agreeable to the Laws of God; and, That they be ſincere and upright in thoſe actions. And both theſe every man may ſufficiently know concerning himſelf; for if the Laws of God be plain, and lye open to every man's underſtanding, then it is as eaſy for every man to know when he obeys God and keeps his Commandments, as when he obeys the commands of his Father or his Prince, and when he keeps the known Laws of the Land. And no ſenſible and conſiderate man ever had any doubt of this kind, for if a man can know any thing he can certainly tell when he keeps or breaks a known Law; ſo that all doubts of this nature are frivolous and idle pretences to cover mens faults, and ſuch as they would be aſhamed to alledge in any other caſe.

And a good man may likewiſe know when he obeys God ſincerely. Not but that men often deceive themſelves with an opinion, or at leaſt a groundleſs hope of their own ſincerity; but if they will deal fairly with themſelves, and uſe due care and diligence, there are very few caſes (if any) wherein they may not know their own ſincerity in any act of obedience to God: For what can a man know concerning himſelf, if not the reality of his own intentions? If any man ſhould in earneſt tell me, that he doubted very much whether he had that friendſhip for me which he made profeſſion of, and that he was afraid that his affection to me was not real and ſincere, I confeſs I ſhould doubt of it too; becauſe I ſhould certainly conclude that no man could know that matter ſo well as he himſelf.

And there is no doubt but whoever hath a hearty kindneſs for another, and a ſincere deſire to ſerve and pleaſe him, knows he has it. And accordingly good and holy men in Scripture do every where with great confidence and aſſurance appeal to God concerning the integrity and ſincerity of their hearts towards him. *Job* and *David*, *Hezekiah* and *Nehemiah* in the *Old Teſtament*; and in the *New* St. *Paul* for himſelf and *Timothy*, makes this ſolemn profeſſion of their ſincerity, 2 *Cor.* 1. 12. *Our rejoicing is this, the Teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have our converſation in the world.* And I cannot call to mind ſo much as any one paſſage in Scripture, from whence it can be collected that any good man ever doubted of his own ſincerity. And to ſay the truth, it would not be modeſty but impudence in any man to declare that he ſuſpects himſelf of hypocriſy; good men have always abhorred the thoughts of it. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job*, and yet he could not bear to have his integrity queſtioned. It was a brave and generous ſpeech of his, *Till I dye, I will not remove my integrity from me.*

And yet it hath ſo happened that *this* is become a very common doubt among religious people, and they have been ſo unreaſonably cheriſhed in it as to have it made a conſiderable evidence of a man's ſincerity to doubt of it himſelf. It is indeed ſaid in Scripture, *Jer.* 17. 9. *That the heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked, who can know it?* which is true concerning our future intentions and actions: no man knowing how his mind may change hereafter. Little did *Hazael* think that ever he ſhould do thoſe things which the Prophet foretold him. But tho this be true in it ſelf, yet 'tis not the meaning of that Text. For the Prophet in that *chapter* plainly makes uſe of this conſideration of the falſhood and deceitfulneſs of mans heart as an argument to take off the People of *Iſrael* from *truſting in the arm of fleſh*, and in thoſe promiſes which were made to them of foreign aſſiſtance from *Egypt:* Becauſe men may pretend fair, and yet deceive thoſe that rely upon them, for *the heart of man is deceitful and deſperately wicked,* and none but God knows whether mens inward intentions be anſwerable to their outward profeſſions; *for he ſearcheth the heart and trieth the reins.* And this I verily believe is all that the *Prophet* here intends, That there is a great deal of fraud and deceit in the hearts of bad men, ſo that no man can rely upon their promiſes and profeſſions; but God knows the hearts of all men. But now becauſe God alone knows the hearts of all men and the ſincerity of their intentions towards one another, doth it from hence follow that it is a thing either impoſſible or very difficult for any man to know the ſincerity of his own preſent intentions and actions? To make any ſuch concluſion were to *condemn the generation of God's children,* thoſe holy and excellent men in Scripture, *Job,* and *David,* and *Hezekiah,* and St. *Paul,* who do ſo frequently appeal to God concerning their own integrity. And ſurely when the *Apoſtle* ſaith, *No man knows the things of a man, but the ſpirit of a man which is in him,* he plainly ſuppoſes that every man is conſcious to the motions and intentions of his own mind. I have inſiſted the longer upon this that I might from the very foundation deſtroy an imagination, which is not only untrue in it ſelf, but has likewiſe been a very great hindrance to the peace and comfort of many good men.

III. Let us enquire whence it comes to paſs that notwithſtanding this ſo many perſons are at ſo great uncertainty about their ſpiritual condition. For the clearing of this matter we will diſtinctly conſider theſe three things. *Firſt,* The grounds of the falſe hopes and confidence of men really bad concerning their good condition. *Secondly,* The cauſleſs doubts and jealouſies of men really good concerning their bad condition. And *Thirdly,* The juſt cauſes of doubting in others. As for the troubles and fears of men who are notoriouſly bad and live in the Practice of known vices, theſe do not fall under our conſideration: If they be troubled about their condition, it is no more than what they ought to be; and if they be only doubtful of it, it is leſs than they ought to be. To perſons in this condition there is only counſel to be given to leave their ſins and become better, but no comfort to be adminiſtred to them till firſt they have followed that counſel: For till they reform, if they think themſelves to be in a bad condition, they think juſt as they ought, and as there is great reaſon, and no body ſhould go about to perſuade them otherwiſe.

Firſt then, We will conſider the grounds of the falſe hopes and confidence of men really bad concerning their good condition. I do not now mean the worſt of men, but ſuch as make ſome ſhew and appearance of goodneſs. It is very unpleaſing to men to fall under the hard opinion and cenſure of others, but the moſt grievous thing in the world for a man to be condemned by himſelf; and therefore it is no wonder that men uſe all manner of ſhifts to avoid ſo great an inconvenience as is the ill opinion of a man's ſelf concerning himſelf and his own condition.

Some therefore rely upon the profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith, and their being baptized into it. But this is ſo far from being any exemption from a good life, that it is the greateſt and moſt ſolemn obligation to it. Doſt thou believe the Doctrine of the Goſpel? thou of all men art inexcuſable if thou alloweſt thy ſelf in ungodlineſs and worldly luſts.

Others truſt to their external Devotion, they frequent the Church, and ſerve God conſtantly, they pray to him, and hear his word, and receive the bleſſed Sacrament: But let us not deceive our ſelves, God is not mocked: All this is ſo far from making amends for the impiety of our lives, that on the contrary, the impiety of our lives ſpoils all the acceptance of our devotions.

tions. *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law* (that is, from obeying it) *even his prayer ſhall be an abomination.*

Others who are ſenſible they are very bad depend very much upon their repentance, eſpecially if they ſet ſolemn times apart for it. And there is no doubt but that a ſincere repentance will put a man into a good condition: But then it is to be conſidered that no repentance is ſincere but that which produceth a real change and reformation in our lives. For we have not repented to purpoſe if we return again to our ſins. It is well thou art in ſome meaſure ſenſible of thy miſcarriage, but thou art never ſafe till thou haſt forſaken thy ſins; thy eſtate and condition towards God is not chang'd, till thou haſt really alter'd thy ſelf and the courſe of thy life.

Others ſatisfy themſelves with the exerciſe of ſome particular graces and virtues, Juſtice, and Liberality, and Charity. And is it not a thouſand pities that thy life is not all of a piece, and that all the other parts of it are not anſwerable to theſe, that thou ſhouldſt loſe the reward of ſo much real goodneſs out of thy fondneſs to any one vice or luſt, that when *thou art not far from the Kingdom of God,* for *lack* of one or two things more thou ſhouldſt fall ſhort of it? Haſt thou never heard what the Scripture ſaith, that *he who offends in one point is a tranſgreſſor of the whole Law?* To make a man a good man, all parts of goodneſs muſt concur, but any one way of wickedneſs is ſufficient to denominate a man bad.

Laſtly, Some who are very careful of their outward carriage and converſation, but yet are conſcious to themſelves of great ſecret faults and vices, when they can find no comfort from themſelves and the teſtimony of their own conſciences, are apt to comfort themſelves in the good opinion which perhaps others have of them. But if we know our ſelves to be bad and *our own hearts to condemn us,* it is not the good opinion of others concerning us which can either alter or better our condition. They may have reaſon for their charity, and yet thou none for thy confidence. Truſt no body concerning thy ſelf rather than thy ſelf, becauſe no body can know thee ſo well as thou mayeſt know thy ſelf.

Theſe, and ſuch as theſe, are the hopes of the Hypocrite, which *Job* elegantly compares to the *Spiders web,* finely and artificially wrought, but miſerably thin and weak; ſo that we our ſelves may ſee through them, and if we lay the leaſt ſtreſs upon them they will break. They are but pleaſant dreams and deluſions, which whenever we are awaken'd to a ſerious conſideration of our condition by the apprehenſions of approaching death and judgment, will preſently vaniſh and diſappear; ſo the ſame *holy man* tells us, *Job* 27. 8. *What is the hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul?*

Secondly, We will conſider in the next place the cauſleſs doubts and jealouſies of men really good, concerning their bad condition. For as ſome are prone beyond all reaſon to delude themſelves with vain hopes of their good condition, ſo others are apt as unreaſonably to torment themſelves with groundleſs fears and jealouſies that their eſtate is bad. And of theſe doubts there are ſeveral occaſions, the chief whereof I ſhall mention, by which we may judge of the reſt that are of the like nature.

1. Some are afraid that they are reprobated from all eternity, and therefore they cannot be the *Children of God.* This is ſo unreaſonable, that if it were not a real cauſe of trouble to ſome perſons it did not deſerve to be conſidered. For no man that ſincerely endeavours to pleaſe God and to keep his Commandments hath from Scripture the leaſt ground to ſuſpect any latent or ſecret decree of God againſt him that ſhall work his ruin. But whatever

the decrees of God be concerning the eternal ſtate of men, ſince they are ſecret to us they can certainly be no rule either of our duty or comfort. And no man hath reaſon to think himſelf rejected of God, either from eternity, or in time, that does not find the marks of Reprobation in himſelf, I mean an evil heart and life. By this indeed a man may know that he is out of God's favour for the preſent, but he hath no reaſon at all from hence to conclude that God hath from all eternity and for ever caſt him off. That God calls him to repentance, and affords to him the ſpace and means of it, is a much plainer ſign that God is willing and ready to have mercy on him than any thing elſe is, or can be, that God hath utterly caſt him off. And therefore for men to judge of their condition by the decrees of God which are hid from us, and not by his word which is *near us and in our hearts,* is as if a man wandring in the wide Sea, in a dark night when the heaven is all clouded about, ſhould yet reſolve to ſteer his courſe by the ſtars which he cannot ſee, but only gueſs at, and neglect the Compaſs, which is at hand and would afford him a much better and more certain direction. This therefore is to be rejected as a fond and groundleſs imagination, and which ought to trouble no body, becauſe no body doth nor can know any thing concerning it. *Moſes* hath long ſince very well determined this matter, *Deut.* 29. 29. *Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but thoſe things which are revealed, unto us and our Children for ever, that we may do all the words of this Law.*

2. Good men are conſcious to themſelves of many frailties and imperfections, and therefore they are afraid of their condition. But God conſiders the infirmities of our preſent ſtate, and expects no other obedience from us in order to our acceptance with him, but what this ſtate of imperfection is capable of: And provided the ſincere endeavour and general courſe of our lives be to pleaſe him and keep his Commandments, the terms of the Goſpel are ſo merciful, that our frailties ſhall not be imputed to us, ſo as to affect our main ſtate and to make us ceaſe to be the Children of God. And tho we may be guilty of many errors and ſecret ſins which eſcape our notice and obſervation, yet it is not impoſſible for us to exerciſe ſuch a repentance for theſe as will be available for their pardon. For we have to deal with a merciful God, who is pleaſed to accept of ſuch an obedience and of ſuch a repentance as we are capable of performing. Now there is a great difference between thoſe ſins which require a particular repentance before we can hope for the pardon of them, (as all great and deliberate and preſumptuous ſins do, which are never committed without our knowledge, and are ſo far from ſlipping out of our memory that they are continually flying in our faces, and we cannot forget them if we would) and ſins of infirmity occaſion'd by ſurprize and violence of temptation, through ignorance or inadvertency: For a general repentance, ſuch as we every day exerciſe in our devotions and prayers to God may ſuffice for theſe. I ſpeak not this to hinder any from a more particular repentance of all their known failings, the more particular the better; but to remove the groundleſs fears and jealouſies of men about their main eſtate and condition. And if any ask how I know that a general repentance will ſuffice for theſe kind of ſins; I anſwer, becauſe more than this in many caſes is impoſſible; ſo that either we muſt reſt ſatisfied that God will forgive them upon theſe terms, or conclude that they ſhall not be forgiven at all, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the Scriptures: I ſay, in many caſes, more than this is impoſſible, becauſe ſins of ignorance, and thoſe common errors and frailties of humane life which *David* calls *ſecret ſins,* are not particularly known to us when they are committed, and conſequently it is impoſſible that we ſhould parti-

cularly repent of them. And therefore in this caſe there can be no doubt but that God doth accept of a general repentance, as he did from *David* when he made that humble confeſſion and prayer to him, *Pſal.* 19. 12. *Who can underſtand his errors? cleanſe thou me from ſecret ſins.*

3. They are afraid their obedience is not ſincere, becauſe it proceeds many times from fear and not always out of pure love to God. For anſwer to this: It is plain from Scripture that God propounds to men ſeveral motives and arguments to obedience, ſome proper to work upon their *fear*, as the threatnings of puniſhment; ſome upon their *hope*, as the promiſes of bleſſing and reward; others upon their *love*, as the mercies and forgiveneſs of God. From whence it is evident he intended they ſhould all work upon us. And accordingly the Scripture gives us inſtances in each kind. Noah *moved with fear* obeyed God in *preparing an Ark*. Moſes *had reſpect unto the recompence of reward.* Mary Magdalen *loved much.* And as it is hard to ſay, ſo it is not neceſſary to determine juſt how much influence and no more each of theſe hath upon us: It is very well if men be reclaimed from their ſins and made good by the joint force of all the conſiderations which God offers to us. To be ſure love is the nobleſt and moſt generous principle of obedience, but fear commonly takes the firſt and faſteſt hold of us, and in times of violent temptation is perhaps the beſt argument to keep, even the beſt of men, within the bounds of their duty.

4. Another cauſe of doubting in good men is, from a ſenſe of their imperfect performance of the duties of Religion, and of the abatement of their affections towards God at ſome times. They have many wandring thoughts in prayer and other exerciſes of devotion, and they cannot for their life keep their minds continually intent on what they are about. This we ſhould ſtrive againſt as much as we can, and that is the utmoſt we can do; but to cure this wholly is impoſſible, the infirmity of our nature and the frame of our minds will not admit of it: And therefore no man ought to queſtion his ſincerity, becauſe he cannot do that which is impoſſible for men to do.

And then for the abatement of our affections to God and Religion at ſome times, this naturally proceeds from the inconſtancy of mens tempers, by reaſon of which it is not poſſible that the beſt of men ſhould be able always to maintain and keep up the ſame degree of zeal and fervour towards God. But our comfort is that God doth not meaſure mens ſincerity by the Tides of their affections, but by the conſtant bent of their reſolutions and the general tenor of their life and actions.

5. Another cauſe of theſe doubts is, that men expect more than ordinary and reaſonable aſſurance of their good condition; ſome particular revelation from God, an extraordinary impreſſion upon their minds to that purpoſe, which they think the Scripture means by the *teſtimony* and *ſeal* and *earneſt of the Spirit.* God may give this when and to whom he pleaſes, but I do not find he hath any where promiſed it. And all that the Scripture means by thoſe phraſes of the *teſtimony* and *ſeal* and *earneſt of the Spirit*, is to my apprehenſion no more but this, That the Holy Spirit which God beſtowed upon Chriſtians in ſo powerful and ſenſible a manner was a *ſeal* and *earneſt* of their reſurrection to eternal life, according to that plain Text, Rom. 8 11. *If the Spirit of him that raiſed up Jeſus from the dead dwell in you, he that raiſed up Chriſt from the dead ſhall alſo quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* But then, who they are that have the Spirit of God is only to be known by the real fruits and effects of it. If we be *led by the Spirit*, and *walk in the Spirit*, and *do not fulfil the luſts of the fleſh*, then *the Spirit of God dwelleth in us.* But this is very far from an immediate

and extraordinary revelation from the Spirit of God to the minds of good men telling them in particular that they are the Children of God. I know not what peculiar favour God may ſhew to ſome, but I know no ſuch thing, nor ever yet met with any wiſe and good man that did affirm it of himſelf: And I fear that in moſt of thoſe who pretend to it, it is either mere fancy, or groſs deluſion.

6. As for the caſe of *melancholy* it is not a reaſonable caſe; and therefore doth not fall under any certain rules and directions. They who are under the power of it are ſeldom fit to take that counſel which alone is fit to be given them, and *that* is, not to believe themſelves concerning themſelves, but to truſt the judgment of others rather than their own apprehenſions. In other caſes every man knows himſelf beſt, but a melancholy man is moſt in the dark as to himſelf. This cauſe of trouble and doubting is very much to be pitied but hard to be removed, unleſs by Phyſick, or by time, or by chance. One may happen to ſay ſomething that may hit the humour of a melancholy man and ſatisfy him for the preſent; but Reaſon muſt needs ſignify very little to thoſe perſons, the nature of whoſe diſtemper it is to turn every thing that can be ſaid for their comfort into objections againſt themſelves.

Thirdly, But beſides thoſe who miſtake their condition either by preſuming it to be better, or fearing it to be worſe than it is, there are likewiſe others who upon good grounds are doubtful of their condition, and have reaſon to be afraid of it: Thoſe I mean, who have ſome beginnings of goodneſs which yet are very imperfect. They have good reſolutions and do many things well, but they often fall and are frequently pull'd back by thoſe evil inclinations and habits which are yet in a great meaſure unſubdued in them. Theſe I cannot liken better than to the *Borderers* between two Countries who live in the marches and confines of two powerful Kingdoms, both which have a great influence upon them, ſo that it is hard to ſay whoſe ſubjects they are and to which Prince they belong: Thus it is with many in Religion, they have pious inclinations and have made ſome fair attempts towards goodneſs, they have begun to refrain from ſin and to reſiſt the occaſions and temptations to it; but ever and anon they are maſtered by their old luſts, and carried off from their beſt reſolutions; and perhaps upon a little conſideration they repent and recover themſelves again, and after a while are again entangled and overcome.

Now the caſe of theſe perſons is really doubtful both to themſelves and others. And the proper direction to be given them in order to their peace and ſettlement, is by all means to encourage them to go on and fortify their good reſolutions; to be more vigilant and watchful over themſelves, to ſtrive againſt ſin and to reſiſt it with all their might. And according to the ſucceſs of their endeavours in this conflict the evidence of their good condition will every day clear up and become more manifeſt; the more we grow in grace, and the ſeldomer we fall into ſin, and the more even and conſtant our obedience to God is, ſo much the greater and fuller ſatisfaction we ſhall have of our good eſtate towards God: For *the path of the juſt is as the ſhining light, which ſhines more and more unto the perfect day*: And *the work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs quietneſs and aſſurance for ever.*

I ſhall only make two or three Inferences from what hath been diſcourſed upon this Argument, and ſo conclude.

1. From hence we learn the great danger of ſins of Omiſſion as well as Commiſſion; *Whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.* The mere neglect of any of the great duties of Religion, of piety towards God, and

of kindneſs and charity to men, tho we be free from the commiſſion of great ſins, is enough to caſt us out of the favour of God and to ſhut us for ever out of his Kingdom, *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirſty, and ye gave me no drink; ſick and in priſon, and ye viſited me not; therefore depart ye curſed.*

2. It is evident from what hath been ſaid, That nothing can be vainer than for men to live in any courſe of ſin and impiety, and yet to pretend to be the Children of God, and to hope for eternal life. The Children of God will do the works of God, and whoever hopes to enjoy him hereafter, will endeavour to be like him here; *Every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himſelf even as He is pure.*

3. You ſee what is the great mark and character of a man's good or bad condition; *whoſoever doth righteouſneſs is of God, and whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.* Here is a plain and ſenſible evidence by which every man that will deal honeſtly with himſelf may certainly know his own condition; and then according as he finds it to be, may take comfort in it, or make haſte out of it. And we need not aſcend into heaven, nor go down into the deep to ſearch out the ſecret counſels and decrees of God; there needs no anxious enquiry whether we be of the number of God's Elect: If we daily mortify our luſts and grow in goodneſs, and take care to add to our faith and knowledge, temperance and patience and charity and all other Chriſtian graces and virtues, we certainly take the beſt courſe in the world to *make our calling and election ſure.* And without this it is impoſſible that we ſhould have any comfortable and well-grounded aſſurance of our good condition. This one mark of *doing righteouſneſs* is that into which all other ſigns and characters, which are in Scripture given of a good man are finally reſolved; And this anſwers all thoſe various phraſes which ſome men would make to be ſo many ſeveral and diſtinct marks of a *Child of God*; as whether we have the true knowledge of God and divine illumination, for *hereby we know that we know him if we keep his Commandments:* whether we ſincerely love God, for *this is the love of God that we keep his Commandments:* and whether God loves us, for *the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs, and his countenance will behold the upright:* whether we be regenerate and born of God, for *whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not:* whether we have *the Spirit of God witneſſing with our ſpirits that we are the Children of God,* for *as many as have the Spirit of God are led by the Spirit,* and *by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the fleſh:* whether we belong to Chriſt, and have an intereſt in him or not, for *they that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh with the affections and luſts thereof:* In a word, whether the promiſe of heaven and eternal life belong to us, for *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord,* but if we *have our fruits unto holineſs, the end* will be *everlaſting life.* So that you ſee at laſt, the Scripture brings all to this one mark, holineſs and obedience to the Laws of God, or a vicious and wicked life; *In this the Children of God are manifeſt, and the Children of the Devil: whoſoever doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.*

Let us then deal impartially with our ſelves, and bring our lives and actions to this trial, and never be at reſt till the matter be brought to ſome iſſue, and we have made a deliberate judgment of our condition, whether we be the *Children of God* or not: And if upon a full and fair examination our conſciences give us this teſtimony, that by the Grace of God we have *denied ungodlineſs and worldly luſts,* and have lived *ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world,* we may take joy and comfort in it; for *if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God:* But if upon the ſearch and trial of our ways our caſe appear clearly to be otherwiſe, or if we have juſt cauſe to doubt of it, let us not venture to continue one moment longer in ſo uncertain and dangerous a condition. And if we deſire to know the way of Peace, the Scripture hath ſet it plainly before us, *Waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well: Come now and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord, tho your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be white as ſnow: Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Tho our caſe be very bad, yet it is not deſperate; *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all men to be embraced, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners*: And he is ſtill willing to ſave us, if we be but willing to leave our ſins and to ſerve him in holineſs and righteouſneſs the remaining part of our lives. We may yet be *turned from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*: We who have ventured ſo long upon the brink of ruin may yet by the infinite mercies of God, and by the power of his Grace be reſcued from the baſe and miſerable ſlavery of the Devil and our luſts *into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.*

And thus I have endeavoured, with all the plainneſs I could, to repreſent every man to himſelf, and to let him clearly ſee what his condition is towards God, and how the caſe of his ſoul and of his eternal happineſs ſtands. And I do verily believe that what I have ſaid in this matter is the truth of God, to which we ought all gladly to yield and render up our ſelves. For *great is Truth, and mighty above all things*: She is faithful and impartial in her counſels, and tho ſhe be not always welcome yet 'tis always wiſe to hearken to her, for in great kindneſs and charity ſhe lets men know their condition and the danger of it that they may take care to prevent it: *With her is no accepting of perſons, and in her judgment there is no unrighteouſneſs.* I will conclude all with that excellent advice of a Heathen Philoſopher, *Make it no longer a matter of diſpute what are the marks and ſigns of a good man, but immediately ſet about it, and endeavour to become ſuch a one.*

Antonin. lib. 10.

SERMON XVI.

Of the Joy which is in Heaven at the Repentance of a Sinner.

LUKE XV. 7.

I ſay unto you, that likewiſe joy ſhall be in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons which need no repentance.

AFter many attempts made in vain to reclaim Sinners from their evil ways and to bring them to the wiſdom of the juſt, it is hard for us who are the Meſſengers of God to men, not to ſit down in deſpondence, and at laſt quite to deſpair of doing good upon them. But when I conſider the infinite patience of God with Sinners and how long *his Spirit ſtrives with them*, why ſhould we, *we* who are Sinners our ſelves, think much to bear with Sinners and patiently to contend with their obſtinacy and perverſeneſs? When I conſider that our bleſſed *Saviour*, the great Preacher and Pattern of Righteouſneſs, did not give over the worſt of men nor deſpair of their recovery: this methinks ſhould make us who are *Ambaſſadors for Chriſt*, unwearied in *beſeeching men in his ſtead to be reconciled to God*.

And of this we have a famous inſtance in this *Chapter*: The *Publicans* and Sinners, as they had done ſeveral times before, came to hear our Saviour: He treated them very kindly, and converſed familiarly with them; at this the *Phariſees* were diſpleaſed and murmured, and this unreaſonable murmurings of theirs gave occaſion to the three *Parables* in this *Chapter*.

In which our Saviour does at once anſwer the Objection of the *Phariſees*, and give all poſſible encouragement to the repentance of theſe great Sinners. He anſwers the *Phariſees* by letting them plainly ſee that he was about the beſt work in the world, the moſt acceptable to God, and matter of greateſt joy to all the heavenly Inhabitants. Inſtead of a ſevere Reproof of their uncharitableneſs he offers that calmly to their conſideration, which ought in all reaſon to convince them that he was no ways to blame for this familiar converſation of his with Sinners, having no other deſign upon them but to reclaim them from their Vices, and to make them fit company for the beſt of men; that he was a Spiritual Phyſician, and therefore his proper work and employment lay among his Patients. And then inſtead of terrifying theſe Sinners, who ſeemed to come with a good mind to be inſtructed by him, he gently inſinuates the moſt winning arguments and the greateſt encouragement to Repentance; by ſhewing how ready God was after all their ſins and provocations to receive them to his grace and favour, provided they did ſincerely repent and betake themſelves to a better courſe: And not only ſo, but that the repentance of a ſinner is a great joy to the great King of the World; and to all that holy and heavenly Hoſt that attend upon Him.

From which method of our Saviour in treating ſo great Sinners ſo gently; I cannot but make this obſervation, for my own uſe as well as for others; That it is good to give, even the greateſt of Sinners, all the encouragement we can to repentance; and tho men have been never ſo bad, yet if they have but this one good quality left in them, that they are patient to be inſtructed, and content to hear good counſel, we ſhould uſe them kindly and endeavour to recover them by the faireſt means; not ſo much upbraiding them for their having been bad, as encouraging them to become better.

To this purpoſe our Saviour uttered *three* Parables; of *the recovery of a loſt ſheep*; of *finding a loſt piece of money*; of *the return of a prodigal ſon to his father*; and tho they all aim at the ſame ſcope and deſign, yet our Saviour uſeth this variety, not only to convey the ſame thing to ſeveral capacities in a more acceptable manner, one ſimilitude happening to hit one perſon, and another another, but likewiſe to inculcate ſo weighty a matter the more upon his hearers and to fix it more deeply in their minds.

The words which I have read are the Moral or application of the firſt *Parable*, concerning a man who had an hundred ſheep, and having loſt one leaves the ninety and nine to go to ſeek that which was loſt; and having found it, with great joy brings it home. By which our Saviour gives us to underſtand, what joy God and the bleſſed Spirits above take in the converſion of a ſinner. *I ſay unto you, that likewiſe joy ſhall be in Heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons which need no repentance.* Than which nothing could have been more proper, both to ſilence the uncharitable murmuring of the Phariſees againſt our Saviour for converſing with Publicans and Sinners to ſo good an end, and likewiſe to encourage ſinners to repent: For why ſhould the Phariſees be diſpleaſed at that which was ſo great a pleaſure to God and the holy Angels? and what greater encouragement to repentance than this; that God is not only willing to receive the returning ſinner, but that the news of his repentance is entertain'd in Heaven with ſo much joy, that if it be poſſible for the bleſſed Inhabitants of that place to have any thing added to their happineſs, this will be a new acceſſion to it?

There are *three* things in the words which require a very careful explication.

1. How we are to underſtand the *joy* that is in *Heaven* at the converſion of a ſinner?

2. Who are here meant by the *juſt perſons that need no repentance?*

3. With what reaſon it is here ſaid, that there is *more joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine juſt perſons who need no repentance?*

There is ſomething of difficulty in each of theſe, which deſerves our heedful and attentive conſideration.

I. How we are to underſtand the *joy that is in Heaven at the repentance of a ſinner?* And this (as indeed this whole paſſage of our Saviour's) we are not to underſtand too ſtrictly and rigorouſly, but as ſpoken in a great meaſure after the manner of men and by way of accommodation to our capacity, ſo far as the perſons here ſpoken of are capable of any addition to their joy and happineſs.

As it refers *to God*, it ſeems very inconſiſtent with the happineſs and perfection of the Divine Nature to ſuppoſe Him really capable of joy, any more than of grief or any other paſſion: Becauſe this would be to imagine ſome new acceſſion to his pleaſure and happineſs, which being always infinite can never have any thing added to it. And therefore we are to underſtand this, as it relates to God, in the ſame manner as we do infinite other paſſages of Scripture where humane paſſions are aſcribed to him, to be ſpoken by way of condeſcenſion and after the language and manner of the ſons of men; and to ſignify only thus much to us, that the converſion of a ſinner is a thing highly pleaſing and acceptable to God.

As it refers to *Angels* and other *Bleſſed Spirits*, I ſee no inconvenience why it may not be underſtood more ſtrictly and literally; that they conceive a new joy at the news of a ſinner's repentance, and find a freſh pleaſure and delight ſpringing up in their minds, whenever they hear the joyful tidings of a ſinner reſcued from the ſlavery of the Devil and the danger of eternal damnation; of a new member added to the Kingdom of God, that ſhall be a companion and ſharer with them in that bleſſedneſs which they enjoy. There ſeems to me to be nothing in this repugnant to the nature and happineſs of bleſſed Spirits in another world. For it is certain, that there are degrees of happineſs among the bleſſed: From whence it neceſſarily follows that ſome of them may be happier than they are. And it is very probable, ſince the happineſs of Angels and good men is but finite, that thoſe who are moſt happy do continually receive new additions to their bleſſedneſs; and that their felicity is never at a ſtand but perpetually growing and improving to all eternity; and that as their knowledge and love do increaſe, ſo likewiſe the capacity and cauſes of their happineſs are ſtill more and more enlarged and augmented: So that it is reaſonable enough to ſuppoſe that there is really joy, among the Angels and Spirits of juſt men made perfect, over every ſinner that repenteth.

II. Who are here meant by the *juſt perſons who need no repentance?* That our Saviour in this expreſſion gives ſome glance and reflection upon the *Phariſees* (who prided themſelves in their own righteouſneſs, and inſtead of confeſſing their ſins to God ſtood upon their own juſtification, as if they needed no repentance) is very probable; becauſe this *Parable* was deſigned to anſwer their murmurings againſt him, for converſing with Publicans and ſinners, and by the bye to give a check to thoſe who were ſo conceited of their own righteouſneſs as if they had no need of repentance. And this is very ſuitable to what our Saviour elſewhere ſays to them upon the like occaſion, that *the whole have no need of the Phyſician, but the ſick*; that *he came not to call the righteous, but the ſinners to repentance.* But yet tho our Saviour expreſſeth himſelf ſo as that the *Phariſees* might with reaſon enough apply it to themſelves, that there was more joy in Heaven over one ſinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine of *them*, who were ſo conceited of their own righteouſneſs that they thought they had no need of repentance (for indeed our Saviour delivers himſelf ſo, as to leave room for ſuch a ſevere application) yet I think there is little doubt to be made but that he intended ſomething further; and that ſuppoſing the *Phariſees* were as juſt as they pretended, and were really righteous men ſo as to ſtand in no need of ſuch a repentance as great ſinners do, yet our Saviour affirms, *there was more joy in Heaven over one penitent ſinner, than over ninety and nine ſuch juſt perſons.*

But are there any perſons in the world ſo juſt, as abſolutely to ſtand in need of no repentance? No, there was never any ſuch perſon in the world, him only excepted who ſaid this, our bleſſed Saviour, *who had no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* And therefore this phraſe of *needing no repentance* is to be underſtood in a qualified ſenſe, and with ſome allowance; otherwiſe our bleſſed Saviour had ſuppoſed a caſe which never was, of a great number of perfectly righteous men. And our Saviour's meaning in this is ſufficiently explained in the laſt Parable of this Chapter, concerning the *Prodigal Son*; where the prodigal ſon is the *ſinner that repented*; and his elder Brother, who had always obſerved and obeyed his father, he is the *juſt perſon who needed no repentance*. So that by him our Saviour plainly deſigns thoſe who being religiouſly educated and brought up in the fear of God had never broke out into any extravagant and vicious courſe of life, and ſo in ſome ſenſe had no need of repentance, that is, of changing the whole courſe of their lives, as the prodigal ſon had. Not but that the beſt of men are guilty of many faults and infirmities which they have too much cauſe to repent of, as our Saviour ſufficiently intimates in that *Parable*: For certainly it was no ſmall infirmity in the elder brother to be ſo envious, and to take ſo heinouſly the joyful welcome and entertainment which his prodigal brother at his return found from his father: But yet this ſingle fault and ſudden ſurprize of paſſion, conſidering the conſtant duty which he had paid to his father throughout the courſe of his life, did not make him ſuch a ſinner as to need ſuch a repentance as his brother did, which conſiſted in a perfect change of the whole courſe of his life. And of ſuch *juſt perſons* as theſe, and of ſuch a *repentance* as this, it ſeems very plain that our Saviour intended this diſcourſe.

III. But the main difficulty of all is, with what reaſon it is here ſaid that *there is more joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine juſt perſons which need no repentance?* Is it not better not to offend, than to ſin and repent? Is not innocence better than amendment, and the wiſdom of prevention to be preferred before that of remedy? Is it worth the while to do amiſs to make way for repentance? and is not this almoſt like *ſinning that grace may abound?* And if repentance be not better than righteouſneſs, why is there more joy in Heaven over the penitent than over the righteous; nay over one penitent ſinner, than over ninety and nine juſt perſons? Do not the bleſſed always rejoice moſt in that which is really beſt? Here is the difficulty, and it requires ſome care and conſideration clearly to remove it. In order to which be pleaſed to conſider theſe *three* things, which I think to be very material to the clearing of it.

1. That the ſame thing conſidered in ſeveral reſpects, may in ſome reſpects have the advantage of another thing and for thoſe reaſons be preferred before it, and yet not have the advantage of it abſolutely and in all reſpects. Moral compariſons are not to be exacted to a Mathematical ſtrictneſs and rigor. To this purpoſe I have obſerved in a former diſcourſe, that it was long ſince judiciouſly noted by *Ariſtotle*, "That moral and proverbial "ſpeeches are not to be taken too ſtrictly, as if they were univerſally true, "and in all caſes: It is ſufficient if they be true for the moſt part, and in ſeveral reſpects which are very conſiderable. And of this nature are moſt of the *Proverbs of Solomon*, and whoſoever ſhall go about to make out the truth of them in all caſes, does in my opinion take a very hard task upon himſelf. But which is nearer to my purpoſe, our Saviour himſelf in the Chapter before my Text, and in the moral application of a Parable too, (namely that of the *unjuſt ſteward*) uſeth a proverbial ſpeech juſt in the ſame manner; *The Children of this world are in their generation wiſer than the Children of light*: Which is only a wiſe obſervation that is generally true and in many reſpects, but not abſolutely and univerſally. For ſome men have been as wiſe and diligent for the glory of God and intereſt of their ſouls, as ever any man was for this world and for the advancement of his temporal intereſt. Of the like nature is this ſaying uſed by our Saviour, probably taken (as our Saviour did many other proverbial Speeches) from the *Jews*, and applied to his own purpoſe. For there are ſeveral ſayings of the *Jewiſh* Maſters much

to this purpoſe: As, *Great is the dignity of penitents*; *Great is the virtue of them that repent, ſo that no creature may ſtand in their rank and order.* And again, *The righteous may not ſtand in the ſame place with thoſe that have repented.* Theſe I confeſs were very high ſayings, but yet very well deſigned for the encouragement of repentance. And they are not without good reaſon, as will appear if we conſider theſe *two* things.

Firſt, That the greater the difficulty of virtue is, ſo much the greater is the praiſe and commendation of it: And not only we our ſelves take the more joy and comfort in it, but it is more admirable and delightful to others. Now it cannot be denied to be much more difficult to break off a vicious habit, than to go on in a good way which we have been trained up in, and always accuſtomed to. Thoſe that have been well educated have great cauſe to thank God, and to acknowledge the care of their Parents and Teachers: For piety and goodneſs are almoſt infinitely eaſier to ſuch perſons, than to thoſe who have wanted this advantage. It is happy for them they never taſted of unlawful pleaſures; if they had, they would poſſibly have drank as deep as others: It is well they were never entangled in a ſinful courſe, nor enſlaved to vicious habits, nor *hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*; if they had, they might poſſibly never have been recovered out of the ſnare of the Devil. By the happineſs of a good education, and the merciful providence of God a great part of many mens virtue conſiſts in their ignorance of vice, and their being kept out of the way of great and dangerous temptations; rather in the good cuſtoms they have been bred up to, than in the deliberate choice of their wills; and rather in the happy preventions of evil, than their reſolute conſtancy in that which is good. And God who knows what is in man, and ſees to the bottom of every man's temper and inclination, knows how far this would have fallen had he had the temptations of other men; and how irrecoverably perhaps he would have been plunged in an evil courſe, had he once entred upon it. So that repentance is a very great thing; and though it be the moſt juſt, and fit, and reaſonable thing in the world, yet for all that it deſerves great commendation, becauſe it is for the moſt part ſo very hard and difficult. And therefore tho abſolutely ſpeaking, innocence is better than repentance, yet, as the circumſtances may be, the virtue of ſome penitents may be greater than of many juſt and righteous perſons.

Secondly, There is this conſideration further to recommend repentance, that they who are reclaimed from a wicked courſe are many times more thoroughly and zealouſly good afterwards: Their trouble and remorſe for their ſins does quicken and ſpur them on in the ways of virtue and goodneſs, and a lively ſenſe of their paſt errors is apt to make them more careful and conſcientious of their duty, more tender and fearful of offending God, and deſirous if it were poſſible to redeem their former miſcarriages by their good behaviour for the future. Their love to God is uſually more vehement and burns with a brighter flame, *for to whomſoever much is forgiven they will love much.* And they are commonly more zealous for the converſion of others, as being more ſenſible of the danger ſinners are in and more apt to commiſerate their caſe, remembring that it was once their own condition and with what difficulty they were reſcued from ſo great a danger. And for the moſt part great penitents are more free from pride and contempt of others, the conſideration of what themſelves once were being enough to keep them humble all their days. So that penitents are many times more throughly and perfectly good, and after their recovery do in ſeveral reſpects outſtrip and excel thoſe who were never engaged in a vicious courſe of life: As a broken bone that is well ſet is ſometimes ſtronger than it was before.

2. It will conduce alſo very much to the extenuating of this difficulty, to conſider that our Saviour does not here compare repentance with abſolute innocence and perfect righteouſneſs, but with the imperfect obedience of good men who are guilty of many ſins and infirmities; but yet upon account of the general courſe and tenor of their lives are by the mercy and favour of the Goſpel eſteemed juſt and righteous perſons, and for the merits and perfect obedience of our bleſſed Saviour ſo accepted by God. Now this alters the caſe very much, and brings the penitent and this ſort of righteous perſons much nearer to one another: ſo that in comparing them together, the true penitent may in ſome caſes, and in ſome reſpects, have the advantage of the righteous, and deſerve upon ſome accounts to be preferr'd before him.

3. Which is principally to be conſidered for the full clearing of this difficulty; this paſſage of our Saviour is to be underſtood as ſpoken very much after the manner of men, and ſuitably to the nature of human paſſions, and the uſual occaſions of moving them. We are apt to be exceedingly affected with the obtaining of what we did not hope for, and much more with regaining of what we looked upon as loſt and deſperate. Whatever be the reaſon of it, ſuch is the nature of man, that we are not ſo ſenſibly moved at the continuance of a good which we have long poſſeſt, as at the recovery of it after it was loſt and gone from us. And the reaſons of a judicious value and eſteem of a ſettled pleaſure and contentment are one thing, and the cauſes of ſudden joy and tranſport another. A continual courſe of goodneſs may in it ſelf be more valuable, and yet repentance after a great fall and long wandrings may be much more moving and ſurprizing. For where things are conſtant and keep in the ſame tenor, they are not apt in their nature to give any new and ſudden occaſion of joy. And this is the reaſon given in the *Parable* of the *Prodigal Son*; where the Father tells his eldeſt Son, who was ſo offended at the joyful reception and welcome of his prodigal Brother, That *He had been always with him, and all that he had was his*; That is, he was ſenſible of his conſtant duty and obedience, than which nothing could have been more acceptable; and that it had not, nor ſhould not loſe its reward: But the return of his other Son, after he had given over all hopes of him, and looked upon his caſe as deſperate, this was a marvellous ſurprize and a happineſs beyond expectation, which is the proper and natural cauſe of joy and gladneſs: And therefore he tells him that upon ſuch an occaſion *it was meet that we ſhould make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was loſt, and is found.* His elder Son's continuance in his duty was the enjoyment of what he had always had, but the return of his prodigal Son was the retrieving of what he had given up for loſt, and a kind of reſurrection from the dead. And thus our bleſſed Saviour to encourage the repentance of ſinners repreſents God after the manner of men, as if our heavenly Father did conceive ſuch a joy upon the repentance of a ſinner as earthly parents are wont to do upon the return of a wild and extravagant Son to himſelf and his duty.

Having thus, as briefly and clearly as I could, explained the ſeveral difficulties in the Text, I ſhall now deduce ſome Inferences from it, and ſo conclude.

1. *Firſt*, That the bleſſed Spirits above have ſome knowledge of the affairs of men here below, becauſe they are ſaid to rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner. This is ſpoken more particularly of the *Angels*, as appears by comparing what is more generally ſaid in the Text, that *there is joy in heaven*, with what is more particularly expreſs'd in the 10*th. verſe*, that *there is*

joy in the preſence of the Angels over one ſinner that repenteth. Now whether the Angels come to this knowledge by virtue of their miniſtry here below for the good of the Elect, and ſo in their continual intercourſe between heaven and earth bring to their fellow-ſervants in heaven the joyful news of the repentance of ſinners upon earth; or whether God be pleaſed from time to time to reveal it to them, as a thing extremely welcome and delightful to good Spirits, and tending to the increaſe of their happineſs, as it is not very material to enquire, ſo perhaps impoſſible for us to determine.

However, it cannot from hence be concluded that the Angels or Saints in Heaven have ſuch an univerſal knowledge of our condition and affairs, as to be a reaſonable ground and warrant to us to pray to them, yea, or to deſire them to pray for us; no, tho this were done without any ſolemn circumſtances of Invocation. For they may very well know ſome things concerning us wherein their own comfort and happineſs is likewiſe concerned, and yet be ignorant of all the reſt of our affairs. This one thing we are ſure they know, becauſe our Saviour hath told us ſo; but we are ſure of no more. And there is neither equal reaſon for their knowledge of our other concernments, nor is there any revelation in Scripture to that purpoſe.

2. *Secondly*, If God and the bleſſed Spirits above rejoice at the converſion of a ſinner, ſo ſhould we too: and not fret and murmur as the *Phariſees* here did. This is the temper of the Devil, and of very bad men, to regret and envy the good and happineſs of others. For it is reaſonable to believe, that proportionable to the *joy* that is in heaven at the repentance of a ſinner, is the *grief* and vexation of the Devil and his inſtruments, of evil Spirits and wicked men. And as the Devil delights in deſtroying ſouls, and *goes about like a roaring lion ſeeking whom he may devour*; ſo no doubt he is in great rage and gnaſheth out of very diſcontent, when at any time he is fruſtrated of his hopes, and the prey which he thought himſelf ſure of is ſnatched out of his jaws. And thus we ſee it is with bad men, they do perſecute thoſe that forſake them and their wicked ways, and refuſe to go along with them *to the ſame exceſs of Riot.*

And this is no-where more viſible than among thoſe of the Church of *Rome.* How full of wrath and indignation are they againſt thoſe who out of pure conviction of the errors and corruptions of their Church come over to ours? How do they perſecute them with ſlanders and reproaches and with all the effects of hatred and malice? So that many times they can ſcarce refrain from doing them a real miſchief, even where it is dangerous to themſelves to attempt it: As if they envied them the grace of God and the opportunity of being ſaved.

I know it is too natural to thoſe of all Communions, to be eager and fierce againſt thoſe that deſert them: And yet ſuppoſing they had the truth certainly on their ſide (which they cannot all have) I ſee no great reaſon for this temper and carriage: For why ſhould I caſt away my patience and my charity, becauſe another man hath made ſhipwrack of his faith? But I do not remember any where among mankind to have obſerved a more implacable malice, a more ſincere and hearty ill-will, than they of the Church of *Rome* do conſtantly expreſs towards thoſe that forſake them; nay, tho they give never ſo modeſt and reaſonable an account of their change, and behave themſelves towards their old friends with all the kindneſs and compaſſion in the world; yet their hatred and indignation againſt them runs ſo high, that one may plainly ſee they would ſooner forgive a man the greateſt ſins that human nature can be guilty of, and the breach of all the ten Commandments, than this one Crime of leaving their Church, that is in truth of growing wiſer and better.

3. *Thirdly*, The conſideration of what hath been ſaid ſhould mightily inflame our zeal and quicken our induſtry and diligence for the converſion of ſinners. For if the converſion of one ſoul be worth ſo much labour and pains, and matter of ſuch joy to the bleſſed God and good Spirits, what pains ſhould not we take in ſo corrupt and degenerate an age as this of ours; where impenitent ſinners do ſo much abound, and the juſt are almoſt failed from among the children of men?

Our bleſſed Saviour indeed (according to the extraordinary decency of all his Parables) puts the caſe very charitably, and lays the ſuppoſition quite on the other ſide: if there were but one ſinner in the world, or but one of a hundred, yet we ſhould very zealouſly intend, and with all our might, the reduction of this one loſt ſheep; and ſhould never be at reſt till this ſingle wandring ſoul were found and ſaved. But God knows this is not our caſe, but quite otherwiſe; which ſhould quicken our endeavours ſo much the more, and make us beſtir our ſelves to the utmoſt, having always in our minds that admirable ſaying of St. *James*, *He that converteth a ſinner from the error of his way, ſhall ſave a ſoul from death.* He that knows the value of an immortal ſoul, and how fearful a thing it is to periſh everlaſtingly, can think no pains too much to take to *ſave a ſoul from death.*

4. *Laſtly*, What an argument and encouragement is here to repentance, even to the greateſt of ſinners? They, I am ſure, ſtand moſt in need of it: And tho they of all others have the leaſt reaſon to look for mercy, yet they ſhall not be refuſed; tho they be like the *Publicans* and *Heathens* among the *Jews*, who were not only reputed but many times really were the worſt of men; tho like the *prodigal Son*, here in the Parable, they have run away from their Father, and *waſted their eſtate in* lewd *and riotous courſes*; yet whenever *they come to themſelves* and are willing to return to their Father, to acknowledge their folly and repent of it, he is ready to receive them; nay much more ready to receive them than they can be to come to him: For when the Prodigal was but coming towards his Father, and *was yet afar off, the Father runs to meet him*, and embraceth him with as much kindneſs as if he had never offended him, and entertains him with more joy than if he had always continued with him.

How does the great God condeſcend to encourage our repentance, repreſenting himſelf and all the bleſſed company of heaven as tranſported with joy at the converſion of a ſinner, and almoſt ſetting a greater value upon repentance than even upon innocence it ſelf? And if our heavenly Father, who hath been ſo infinitely offended and ſo highly provoked by us beyond all patience, be ſo ready, ſo forward, ſo glad to receive us, and there be no hindrance, no difficulty, no diſcouragement on his part; is it poſſible after all this that we can be ſuch fools and ſuch enemies to our ſelves, as to be backward to our own happineſs! All of us, the beſt of us, have too much cauſe for repentance; and I fear too many of us ſtand in need of that repentance intended by our Saviour in the Text, which conſiſts in the change of our whole lives.

But I will not upbraid you with your faults; having no deſign to provoke, but only to perſuade men. I leave it to every one's conſcience to tell him how great a ſinner, how grievous an offender he hath been. God knows we take no pleaſure in mentioning the ſins of men, but only in their amendment; and we would, if it were poſſible, even without minding them how bad they have been, perſuade and encourage them to be better.

It is but a ſmall conſideration to tell you how much it would chear and comfort our hearts, and quicken our zeal and induſtry for the ſalvation of our ſouls, to ſee ſome fruit of our labours; that all our pains are not loſt, and that all the good counſel that is from hence tendred to you is not like rain falling upon the rocks, and ſhowers upon the ſands.

But I have much greater conſiderations to offer to you; That your Repentance will at once rejoice the heart of God, and Angels, and Men: that it is a returning to a right mind, and the reſtoring of you to your ſelves, to the eaſe and peace of your own conſciences, and to a capacity of being everlaſtingly happy: that it is to take pity upon your ſelves and your poor immortal ſouls; and to take due care to prevent that which is to be dreaded above all things, the being miſerable for ever: and laſt of all, That if thou wilt not repent now, the time will certainly come, and that perhaps in this life, when you ſhall ſee the greateſt need of repentance, and yet perhaps with miſerable *Eſau find no place for it, tho you ſeek it carefully with tears*; when you *ſhall cry Lord, Lord, and the door ſhall be ſhut againſt you; and ſhall ſeek to enter, but ſhall not be able.* To be ſure in the other world you ſhall eternally repent to no purpoſe, and be continually lamenting your wretched condition without hopes of remedy; For *there ſhall be weeping and wailing* without effect, without intermiſſion, and without end.

And what cauſe have we to thank God that this is not yet our caſe, that we are yet on this ſide the pit of deſtruction, and the gulph of deſpair? O the infinite patience and boundleſs goodneſs of God to ſinners! With what clemency hath he ſpared us, and *ſuffered our manners* thus long? And with what kindneſs and concernment does he ſtill call upon us to leave our ſins and to return to him, as if in ſo doing we ſhould make him happy and not our ſelves? With what earneſt longings and deſires doth he wait and wiſh for our repentance, ſaying, *O that there were ſuch a heart in them! O that they would hearken unto my voice! When ſhall it once be?* Thus God is repreſented in *Scripture* as patiently attending and liſtning what effect his admonitions and counſels, his reproofs and threatnings will have upon ſinners, Jer. 8. 6. *I hearkened and I heard, but they ſpake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done? Every one turned to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battel.*

And is not this our caſe? God hath long waited for our repentance; and once a year we ſolemnly pretend to ſet about it: But many of us hitherto, I fear, inſtead of returning to God have but more blindly and furiouſly run on in our courſe, *like the horſe that hath no underſtanding*; yea, in this more bruitiſh than the Beaſt, that he ruſheth into the battel without any conſideration of death or danger, and deſtroys himſelf without a ſyllogiſm: But we ſinners have Reaſon, and yet are mad; the greateſt part of evil-doers are ſufficiently ſenſible of the danger of their courſe, and convinced that eternal miſery and ruin will be the end of it; and yet, I know not how, they make a ſhift upon one pretence or other to diſcourſe and reaſon themſelves into it.

But becauſe *the word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than a two-edged ſword*, and comes with a greater weight and force upon the minds of men than any human perſuaſion whatſoever, I will conclude all with thoſe ſhort and ſerious counſels and exhortations of God to ſinners by his holy Prophets.

Conſider and ſhew your ſelves men, O ye tranſgreſſors: Be inſtructed, O Jeruſalem, leſt my ſoul depart from thee: ſeek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near: Repent and turn your ſelves from all your tranſgreſſions, ſo iniquity ſhall not be your ruin.

SERMON XVII.

Of the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

MATTH. XII. 31, 32.

Wherefore I ſay unto you, All manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men, but the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men:

And whoſoever ſpeaketh a word againſt the Son of man, it ſhall be forgiven him; But whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.

THE occaſion of theſe words of our bleſſed Saviour was the blaſphemy of the *Phariſees* againſt that Divine Power by which he wrought his miracles, and particularly did caſt out Devils. Which works of his, though they were wrought by the Spirit of God, yet they obſtinately and maliciouſly imputed them to the power of the Devil. Upon which our Saviour takes occaſion to declare the danger of the ſin, which he calls *blaſpheming of the Holy Ghoſt*: and tells them that this was ſo great a ſin above all other, that it is in a peculiar manner unpardonable. *Wherefore I ſay unto you*, &c.

For the explaining of theſe words, and the nature and unpardonableneſs of this ſin, we will enquire into theſe four things:

Firſt, What is the difference between ſpeaking againſt the Son of Man, and ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

Secondly, Wherein the nature of this ſin or blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt doth conſiſt.

Thirdly, In what ſenſe this ſin is here ſaid to be peculiarly unpardonable. And

Fourthly, Upon what account it is ſo.

1. What is the difference between *ſpeaking againſt the Son of Man and ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. The reaſon of this enquiry is, becauſe the Text plainly puts a great difference between them, though it be not obvious to diſcern where it lies. For our Saviour tells us that *whoſoever ſpeaks a word againſt the Son of Man it ſhall be forgiven him, but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt it ſhall never be forgiven him*: And yet this blaſphemy of the *Phariſees* againſt the Holy Ghoſt was ſpeaking againſt the Son of Man. For to ſay he caſt out Devils by the power of the Devil, though it was a blaſpheming of the Holy Ghoſt by whoſe power he wrought theſe miracles, yet it was likewiſe a blaſpheming of Chriſt himſelf, and was in effect to ſay that he was no true Prophet nor did come from God, but was a Magician and Impoſtor.

For the removing of this difficulty I ſhall not need to ſay as ſome learned men have done, That by *the Son of Man* is here to be underſtood any man, and that our Saviour is not particularly deſigned by it. That ſeems very hard, when our Saviour is ſo frequently in the Goſpel called the *Son of Man*. And eſpecially when St. *Luke* reciting theſe words, does immediately before give him this very title to put the matter out of all doubt, *Luke* 12. 8, 9, 10. *Alſo I ſay unto you, Whoſoever ſhall confeſs me before men, him ſhall the Son of man alſo confeſs before the Angels of God: But he that denieth me before men ſhall be denied before the Angels of God.* Upon which it follows, *And whoſoever ſhall ſpeak a word againſt the Son of man it ſhall be forgiven him.* So that in all reaſon the Son of man is the very ſame perſon that had this Title given him in the foregoing words, *viz.* our bleſſed Saviour. So that I take it for granted, that by ſpeaking againſt the Son of man is here meant ſpeaking againſt Chriſt: And by ſpeaking againſt him, as it is oppoſed to ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt, is meant all thoſe reproaches and contumelies which they caſt upon our Saviour's perſon, without reflecting upon that divine power which he teſtified by his miracles. As their reproaching him with the meanneſs of his birth, *Is not this the Carpenter's ſon?* with the place of it (as they ſuppoſed) *out of Galilee ariſeth no Prophet*: Their reflecting upon his life, ſaying that he was *a wine-bibber and a glutton, a friend of Publicans and ſinners*; with many other calumnies which they maliciouſly caſt upon him.

But by ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt is meant their blaſpheming and reproaching that divine power whereby he wrought his miracles; which though it did at laſt likewiſe reflect upon our Saviour's perſon, yet it was an immediate reflection upon the Holy Ghoſt, and a blaſpheming of him; and therefore it is called ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt, by way of diſtinction or oppoſition to the other calumnies which they uſed again our Saviour; which were proper blaſphemies and reproaches of his perſon, but not of the Holy Ghoſt alſo, as this was. This ſeems to me to be the true difference here intended by our Saviour between *ſpeaking againſt the Son of man, and ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt.* Let us in the

II. *Second* place, enquire wherein the *nature* of this ſin or blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt doth conſiſt. And the true nature of this ſin, tho it be ſo plainly to be gathered from our Saviour's deſcription of it, yet I know not how, a great many learned men have made a hard ſhift to miſtake it. Some have made it to be *final Impenitency*, becauſe this is unpardonable. But why that rather than any thing elſe that is bad ſhould be called a blaſpheming of the Holy Ghoſt, it is hard to give a reaſon. Others have placed the nature of it in a *wilful and obſtinate oppoſition of the truth*; which though it be a great ſin, and included in the ſin here ſpoken of, or a concomitant of it; yet is there great reaſon to believe that this is not all that is here meant by it. Others would have it to conſiſt in a malicious oppoſition of the Truth, *when men know and are convinced that it is the Truth*; which is a great ſin indeed, if ever any man were guilty of it; but it is a great Queſtion whether human nature be capable of it. A man may indeed have ſufficient means of conviction, and yet not be convinc'd; but it is hardly imaginable that a man ſhould oppoſe the truth when he is actually convinc'd that it is the truth. And to mention no more, others think it to conſiſt in a renouncing of the truth *for fear of ſuffering*; which made *Francis Spira* to think that he had committed this ſin.

But with all due reſpect to the judgment of others, I cannot think that any of theſe is the ſin our Saviour here deſcribes. As I ſhall endeavour plainly to ſhew, by conſidering the occaſion of our Saviour's mentioning of it, the perſons upon whom our Saviour chargeth this ſin, and upon what account he chargeth them with it.

At the 22*d. verſe* of this *Chapter* there was brought to our Saviour *one poſſeſſed with a Devil, blind and dumb, and he healed him.* Upon this *the people were amazed, and ſaid, Is not this the Son of David?* that is, the *Meſſias.* The Phariſees hearing this, with great bitterneſs and contempt ſaid, *This fellow doth not caſt out Devils but by Beelzebub the Prince of Devils.* Upon this our Saviour repreſents to them the unreaſonableneſs of this calumny; and that upon theſe two conſiderations: 1*ſt.* That it was very unlikely that the Devil ſhould lend him this power to uſe it againſt himſelf. *Every Kingdom divided againſt it ſelf is brought to deſolation: and every City or Houſe divided againſt it ſelf ſhall not ſtand. And if Satan caſt out Satan, he is divided againſt himſelf, how ſhall then his Kingdom ſtand?* 2*dly*, Our Saviour tells them, they might with as much reaſon attribute all miracles to the Devil. There were thoſe among themſelves who caſt out Devils in the name of the God of *Abraham, Iſaac,* and *Jacob,* (as *Origen,* and *Tertullian,* and *Juſtin Martyr* tells us.) Of theſe our Saviour ſpeaks, and asks the Phariſees *by what power they caſt them out.* But they acknowledged that theſe did it by the power of God, and there was no cauſe but their malice why they ſhould not have acknowledged that he did it likewiſe by the ſame power, *ver.* 27. *If I by Beelzebub caſt out Devils, by whom do your Children caſt them out? therefore they ſhall be your judges*; that is, this may be ſufficient to convince you of malice to me: *But if I caſt out Devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,* that is, the *Meſſias* is come; becauſe he wrought theſe and other miracles to prove that he was the *Meſſias.* And then it follows, *Wherefore I ſay unto you, All manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men, but the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men.*

So that the *Phariſees* are the perſons charged with this ſin or blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt. And their blaſphemy was plainly this, that when he caſt out Devils by the Spirit of God, they ſaid he did it by the power of the Devil; they maliciouſly aſcribed theſe works of the Holy Ghoſt to the Devil.

And that this is the ground why our Saviour chargeth them with this ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is yet more plain from St. *Mark,* Mark 3. 28, 29, 30. *Verily I ſay unto you, All ſins ſhall be forgiven unto the Sons of men, and blaſphemies wherewith ſoever they ſhall blaſpheme: but he that blaſphemeth againſt the Holy Ghoſt, hath never forgiveneſs, but is in danger of eternal damnation; becauſe they ſaid he hath an unclean Spirit:* That is, becauſe the *Phariſees* charged him to be a Magician and to have a familiar Spirit, by whoſe aſſiſtance he did thoſe works, when in truth he did them by the Spirit of God, therefore our Saviour declares them guilty of this ſin of blaſpheming the Holy Ghoſt, which ſhould never be forgiven.

So that the nature of this ſin did conſiſt in a moſt malicious oppoſition to the utmoſt evidence that could be given to the truth of any Religion. Our bleſſed Saviour to ſhew that he was ſent by God, and came from him, wrought miracles, ſuch as did plainly evidence a Divine power and preſence accompanying him. For in St. *Luke* he is ſaid to do them *by the finger of God,* Luke 11. 20. *By the finger of God,* that is, to do ſuch things as were undeniable evidences of the Divine power and preſence. And this is the utmoſt teſtimony that God ever gave to any perſon that was ſent by him. And the *Phariſees* were eye-witneſſes of thoſe miracles which our Saviour wrought, ſo that they could not deny them: Yet ſuch was their oppoſition to him and his Doctrine, that though they ſaw theſe things done by him, and could not deny the reality of them, yet rather than they would own him to be the *Meſſias* and his Doctrine to come from God, they moſt maliciouſly and unreaſonably aſcribed them to the power of the Devil. And this was the blaſphemy which they were guilty of againſt the Holy Ghoſt. And herein lay the greatneſs of their ſin, in reſiſting the evidence of thoſe miracles which were ſo plainly wrought by the Holy Ghoſt; and which though themſelves ſaw, yet they maliciouſly imputed them to the Devil, rather than they would be convinced by them. And this is ſo very plain, that hardly any man that conſiders our Saviour's diſcourſe upon this occaſion can otherwiſe determine the nature of this ſin, eſpecially if he do but attend to thoſe remarkable words which I cited before, (*Mark* 3. 29.) *But he that blaſphemeth againſt the Holy Ghoſt hath never forgiveneſs, but is in danger of eternal damnation*; *becauſe they ſaid he hath an unclean ſpirit.* I come now to the

III. *Third* thing I propounded, *namely*, in what ſenſe this ſin is here ſaid to be peculiarly *unpardonable*? For this ſin our Saviour poſitively affirms to be in this different from all other ſins, that it is capable of no pardon: *I ſay unto you, All manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men*; *but the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall not be forgiven unto men:* And to ſhew what he means by the not forgiving of it, he tells us, that eternal puniſhment ſhall follow it in the other world. *Whoſoever ſpeaketh a word againſt the Son of man, it ſhall be forgiven him*: *but whoſoever ſpeaketh againſt the Holy Ghoſt, it ſhall never be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.* Which St *Mark* expreſſeth more plainly, that it ſhall bring thoſe who are guilty of it to *eternal damnation*, Mark 3. 29. *He that blaſphemeth againſt the Holy Ghoſt, hath never forgiveneſs, but is liable to eternal damnation.* So that when our Saviour ſays, *it ſhall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor in the world to come*, he does not intend to inſinuate that ſome ſins which are not forgiven in this world may be forgiven in the other; but in theſe words he either alludes to the opinion of the *Jews* concerning the effect of the higheſt excommunication, the ſentence whereof they held not to be reverſible, neither in this world nor the other; or elſe the reaſon of this expreſſion may probably be to meet with a common and falſe opinion amongſt the *Jews*, which was, That ſome ſins which are not pardoned to men in this life may by ſacrifices be expiated in the other; and therefore he ſays it ſhall never be forgiven, neither in this world nor the other. And St. *Mark* more plainly, that thoſe who are guilty of it ſhall *never have forgiveneſs*, but *be liable to eternal damnation.* So that our Saviour's meaning ſeems plainly to be this, that this ſin is altogether incapable of forgiveneſs. I know ſome have endeavoured to mollify this matter, but (I think) without ſufficient reaſon. *Grotius* underſtands the words *comparatively*, that any ſort of ſin ſhall ſooner be forgiven than this againſt the Holy Ghoſt; and that our Saviour only intended to expreſs the greatneſs and heinouſneſs of this ſin above others, in which reſpect the pardon of it would be more difficult than of any other ſin; but yet that the caſe of ſuch a perſon is not abſolutely deſperate: But if our Saviour had intended to ſay that this ſin was abſolutely unpardonable, I would fain know how could he have expreſſed the matter in higher and fuller words? Dr *Hammond* mollifies the words another way, that this ſin ſhall never be pardoned but upon a *particular repentance* for it: As if our Saviour's meaning was, that a general repentance, which was ſufficient for ſins of Ignorance, would not be ſufficient in this caſe, but there muſt be a particular repentance for it, without which it would never be pardoned. But this is by no means agreeable to the ſcope of our Saviour's diſcourſe: Becauſe he plainly intends to difference this from all other ſorts of ſins, I ſay unto you, *all manner of ſin and blaſphemy* ſhall be forgiven unto men. But according to this interpretation our Saviour muſt mean that all other ſins would be forgiven upon a general repentance; which is not true, for there are many other ſins beſides ſins of Ignorance, there are wilful and heinous ſins, ſuch as wilful murther and adultery and blaſphemy, (that only excepted which is againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*) and the like groſs ſins, which all Divines hold ſhall not be forgiven but upon a *particular repentance.* So that this interpretation does not ſufficiently difference this ſin from all other ſorts of ſins, which is yet very plain our Saviour intended to do. It remains then that theſe words muſt in all reaſon be underſtood abſolutely, that the perſons that are guilty of this great ſin ſhall never have it forgiven unto them. And it may be this will not ſeem ſo harſh when we have conſidered in the

IV. *Fourth* place, *how* it comes to paſs that this ſin is above all others incapable of pardon: and that, upon theſe two accounts.

Firſt, Becauſe by this ſin men reſiſt their laſt remedy, and oppoſe the beſt and utmoſt means of their conviction. What can God be imagined to do more to convince a man of a Divine Revelation, or of the truth of any Doctrine or meſſage that comes from him than to work miracles to this purpoſe? And what greater aſſurance can men have that miracles are wrought, than to be eye-witneſſes of them themſelves? And if men will reſiſt ſuch evidence, what can God do more for their ſatisfaction? If when men ſee plain miracles wrought they will ſay that it is not the power of God that does them, but the power of the Devil: And if when men ſee the Devils caſt out, they will ſay that the Devil conſpires againſt himſelf, this is to outface the Sun at Noon-day, and there is no way left to convince ſuch perverſe perſons of the truth of any Divine Revelation. So that there is no remedy but ſuch perſons muſt continue in their oppoſition to the truth. For this is ſuch a ſin as does in its own nature ſhut out and prevent all remedy. And he that thus perverſly and maliciouſly oppoſeth the truth, muſt upon the ſame grounds unavoidably continue in his oppoſition to it; becauſe there is nothing left to be done for his conviction, more than is already done. If God ſhould ſend a perſon immediately from Heaven to him to convince him of his error, he can give him no greater teſtimony that he comes from God, than miracles: And if when God enables that perſon to work theſe by the power of his Spirit, this man will obſtinately impute them to the power of the Devil, he defeats all the imaginable means of his own conviction. So that it is no wonder if that ſin be unpardonable, which reſiſts the laſt and utmoſt means which God hath ever yet thought fit to uſe to bring men to repentance and ſalvation. And if God were willing to reveal himſelf and the way to pardon and ſalvation to ſuch a one, he doth by this very temper and diſpoſition render himſelf incapable of being ſatisfied and convinced concerning any divine Revelation.

Secondly, Becauſe this ſin is of that high nature that God is therefore juſtly provoked to withdraw his grace from ſuch perſons; and it is probable, reſolved ſo to do; without which grace they will continue impenitent. There is no doubt but God, if he will, can work ſo powerfully upon the minds of men by his Grace and Spirit, as to convince the moſt obſtinate: and ſuppoſing them to be convinced and repent, it cannot be denied but that they would be forgiven. And therefore when our Saviour here ſays they ſhall not be forgiven, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that he means that when perſons are come to that degree of obſtinacy and malice God will (as juſtly he may) withdraw his grace from them: *His ſpirit will not ſtrive with them* to overcome their obſtinacy, but will leave them to the byaſs of their own perverſe and malicious minds; which will ſtill engage them in a further oppoſition to the truth, and finally ſink them into perdition. So that being deſerted by God, and for want of the neceſſary help and aid of his grace (juſtly withdrawn from them) continuing finally impenitent, they become incapable of forgiveneſs both in this world and that which is to come. And there is nothing that can ſeem harſh or unreaſonable in this, to thoſe who grant (as I think all men do) that God may be ſo provoked by men as juſtly to withdraw his grace from them in this life, that grace which is neceſſary to their repentance. And ſurely if any provocation be likely to do it, this cannot be denied to be of all others the greateſt, obſtinately and maliciouſly to oppoſe the utmoſt evidence that God ever gave to the truth of any Doctrine revealed by him. And of this the *Phariſees*, who are here charged with this ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, were notoriouſly guilty in reſiſting the clear evidence of our Saviour's miracles.

And thus I have done with the *four* things I propounded to enquire into from theſe words, *namely*, The difference between ſpeaking againſt the Son of man, and ſpeaking againſt the Holy Ghoſt; wherein the nature of this ſin or blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt does conſiſt; and in what ſenſe this ſin is ſaid to be unpardonable; and upon what account it is ſo, *namely*, becauſe men by this ſin reſiſt their laſt remedy, and oppoſe the beſt and utmoſt means of their conviction: And becauſe it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed that upon a provocation of this high nature, God may and is reſolved to withdraw that grace from ſuch perſons which is neceſſary to their repentance, without which their ſin remains for ever unpardonable.

All that now remains is to make this diſcourſe ſome way or other uſeful to our ſelves. And it may very well ſerve to theſe *two* purpoſes. *Firſt*, to comfort ſome very good and pious perſons, who are liable to deſpair out of an apprehenſion that they have committed *this ſin*. *Secondly*, to caution others againſt the approaches to it.

1. *Firſt*, To comfort ſome very good and pious perſons, who are liable to deſpair upon an apprehenſion that they have committed this great and unpardonable ſin; and conſequently are utterly incapable of ever being reſtored to the mercy and favour of God. And nothing can be more for the comfort of ſuch perſons than to underſtand aright what the nature of this ſin was, and wherein the heinouſneſs of it doth conſiſt; which I have endeavoured to manifeſt. And if this be the nature of it which I have declared, as it ſeems very plain that it is, then I cannot ſee how any perſon *now* is likely to be in thoſe circumſtances as to be capable of committing it. And being a ſin of ſo heinous a nature, and declared by our Saviour to be abſolutely unpardonable, there is no reaſon to extend it beyond the caſe to which our Saviour applies it; which was the reſiſting of the evidence of the miracles which were wrought by the truth of Chriſtianity, by thoſe who were eye-witneſſes of them, *that is*, by thoſe who had the utmoſt aſſurance of them that human nature is capable of. And not only a bare reſiſtance of that evidence, but with a very malicious circumſtance, ſo as to impute thoſe works which were wrought by the *Holy Ghoſt* to the power of the *Devil*. This was the caſe of the *Phariſees* whom our Saviour chargeth with this ſin. And no body hath warrant to extend this ſin any further than this caſe: and without good warrant it would be the moſt uncharitable thing in the world to extend it any further.

That which comes neareſt to it, both in the heinouſneſs of the crime and the unpardonableneſs of it, is *total Apoſtacy from Chriſtianity* after the embracing of it, and full conviction of the truth of it. And this the Scripture ſeems to place, if not in the ſame rank, yet very near to it. And of this the Apoſtle ſpeaks very often in the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews* under the name of *unbelief*, and *ſin* by way of eminence, as being the great *ſin* that Chriſtians were in danger of falling into, called in that *Epiſtle*, (*Heb.* 12. 1.) ἡ εὐπερίστατος ἁμαρτία, the *ſin* which Chriſtians, by reaſon of the *circumſtances* they were then in, were eſpecially ſubject to: And he parallels it with the caſe of the *Jews* in the wilderneſs, concerning whom *God ſware that they ſhould not enter into his reſt, namely,* the earthly *Canaan* which was a type of *Heaven*, Chap. 3. ver. 18. And Chap. 6. ver. 4, 5, 6. more expreſly; *For it is impoſſible that thoſe who were once enlightned, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they ſhould fall away, to renew them again to repentance.* Where by *impoſſible,* the leaſt that can be meant is that it is extremely difficult for ſuch perſons to recover themſelves by repentance. And 'tis obſervable that thoſe perſons are ſaid to have been *partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*, by which is meant that they were endued with a power of miracles by the *Holy Ghoſt*, or were under the conviction of them as having ſeen them wrought by others. So that this Apoſtacy may be ſaid in that reſpect to be *a ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.* So likewiſe, *Chap.* 10. *verſe* 26. *If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth* (that is, if we apoſtatize from Chriſtianity after we have embraced the profeſſion of it, as appears plainly from the ſcope of the Apoſtle's diſcourſe) *there remains no more ſacrifice for ſin:* which expreſſion declares this ſin either to be unpardonable, or ſomething very like it. And at the 29*th verſe*, thoſe perſons are ſaid to *tread under foot the Son of God, and to do deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace.* Which ſignifies that the ſin there ſpoken of is more immediately committed againſt the Holy Spirit of God. St. *Peter* likewiſe declares the great danger of this ſin, 2 *Pet.* 2. 20. *If after they have eſcaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worſe with them than the beginning.* St. *John* likewiſe ſeems to ſpeak of this *ſin* of *Apoſtacy*, and to call it *a ſin unto death:* Diſcouraging Chriſtians rather, from praying for thoſe who were fallen into it; which gives great ſuſpicion that he looked upon it as hardly pardonable, 1 John 5. 16. *If any man ſee his brother ſin a ſin not unto death, he ſhall ask, and he ſhall give him life for thoſe that ſin not unto death. There is a ſin unto death, I do not ſay that he ſhall pray for it.* Now that by *the ſin unto death* the *Apoſtle* here means *Apoſtacy* from the *Chriſtian Religion* to the *Heathen Idolatry* ſeems extremely probable from what follows, *ver.* 18. *We know that whoſoever is born of God ſinneth not, but keepeth himſelf, and that wicked one toucheth him not*; that is, he preſerveth himſelf from Idolatry, which the Devil had ſeduced the world into, *ver.* 19. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedneſs,* ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ, *in the wicked one*; that is, is under the power of the Devil; *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us underſtanding to know him that is true*; that is, to diſtinguiſh between the true God and Idols. And then it follows, *This is the true God, and eternal life: Little Children keep your ſelves from Idols.* Which laſt caution is a key to the underſtanding of all the reſt, and makes it very probable that the ſin unto death is apoſtacy from Chriſtianity unto Idolatry: Otherwiſe it is hard to imagine how the laſt clauſe comes in, *Little Children* *keep your ſelves from Idols.* And this is that ſin which of all other approacheth neareſt to this *ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt* which our Saviour ſpeaks of, and concerning the pardonableneſs of which the Scripture ſeems to ſpeak very doubtfully. But if it were of the ſame unpardonable nature, yet this can be no trouble to thoſe perſons I am ſpeaking of, who cannot but know themſelves to be far enough from the guilt of this ſin.

As for thoſe other ſins which by ſome are taken to be the ſins againſt the Holy Ghoſt, they are either ſuch as perhaps no man is capable of committing, as a *malicious oppoſition to the truth when I am convinced and know it to be the truth:* For this ſeems to be a contradiction, to know any thing to be the truth and to believe it to be ſo, and yet to oppoſe it; becauſe the underſtanding can no more oppoſe truth as truth, than the will can refuſe good as good. Or elſe, they are ſuch as no man can know he is guilty of in this life; as, *final impenitency*, which ſuppoſeth a man to live and dye without repentance. Or elſe, ſuch as I think no good man is incident to; as, *a malicious and perverſe oppoſing of the truth after ſufficient means of conviction.* However, none of theſe are that which the Scripture deſcribes to be the *ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, as I have already ſhewn.

But ſtill there are two things which uſually trouble honeſt and well-meaning perſons, but are rather the effects of Melancholy than any reaſonable ground of trouble. Some think that every *deliberate ſin* againſt knowledge, and after conviction, is *the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. This is acknowledged to be a very great aggravation of ſin, and ſuch as calls for a great and particular repentance; but does by no means render a man incapable of forgiveneſs. Others are troubled with *blaſphemous thoughts*, and thoſe they think to be the *ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. But this is generally the mere effects of melancholy, and the perſons that are troubled with theſe black thoughts are no ways conſenting to them, but they riſe in their minds perfectly againſt their wills and without any approbation of theirs: And in this caſe they are ſo far from being the unpardonable ſin, that I hope, yea and verily believe, they are no ſins at all, but the mere effects of a bodily diſtemper; and no more imputed to us than the wild and idle ravings of a man in a frenzy or a fever. And God forbid that the natural effects of a bodily diſeaſe ſhould bring guilt upon our ſouls. So that theſe perſons have reaſon enough for comfort; but the miſery is, their preſent diſtemper renders them incapable of it.

2. *Secondly*, The other uſe I would make of this Diſcourſe is, to caution men againſt the *degrees and approaches* of this ſin. For if the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt be of ſuch a high nature and ſo unpardonable, then all approaches to it are very dreadful. Such as are, *prophane ſcoffing at Religion*, and the *Holy Spirit* of God which dwells in good men: *Abuſe of the Holy Scriptures*, which were indited by the Spirit of God: *Perverſe Infidelity*, notwithſtanding all the evidence which we have for the truth of Chriſtianity, and ſufficient aſſurance of the Miracles wrought for the confirmation of it brought down to us by credible Hiſtory, though we were not eye-witneſſes of them: *Obſtinacy in a ſinful and vicious courſe*, notwithſtanding all the motives and arguments of the Goſpel to perſuade men to repentance. *Sinning againſt the clear conviction of our Conſciences, and the motions and ſuggeſtions of God's Holy Spirit* to the contrary. *Malicious oppoſing of the truth* when the arguments for it are very plain and evident to any impartial and unprejudiced mind, and when he that oppoſeth the Truth hath no clear ſatisfaction in his own mind to the contrary, but ſuffers himſelf to be furiouſly and headily carried on in his oppoſition to it. Theſe are all ſins of a

very high nature, and of the neareſt affinity with this great and unpardonable ſin, of any that can eaſily be inſtanced in. And though God, to encourage the repentance of men, have not declared them unpardonable, yet they are great provocations; and if they be long continued in, we know not how ſoon God may withdraw his grace from us, and ſuffer us to be *hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.*

Be ready then to entertain the truth of God whenever it is fairly propounded to thee, and with ſuch evidence as thou art willing to accept in other matters where thou haſt no prejudice nor intereſt to the contrary. Do nothing contrary to thy known duty, but be careful in all things to obey the Convictions of thine own Conſcience, and to yield to the good motions and ſuggeſtions of God's *Holy Spirit*, who works ſecretly upon the minds of men, and inſpires us many times gently with good thoughts and inclinations, and is griev'd when we do not comply with them; and after many repulſes will at laſt withdraw himſelf from us, and leave us to be aſſaulted by the temptations of the Devil, and to be hurried away by our own luſts into ruin and perdition.

SERMON XVIII.

The Example of Jeſus in doing Good.

ACTS X. 38.

------*Who went about doing good.*

WHEN Almighty God deſigned the Reformation of the World and the reſtoring of Man to the Image of God, the Pattern after which he was firſt made, he did not think it enough to give us the moſt perfect Laws of holineſs and virtue; but hath likewiſe ſet before us a living Pattern, and a familiar example to excite and encourage us, to go before us and ſhew us the way, and as it were to lead us by the hand in the obedience of thoſe Laws. Such is the Sovereign Authority of God over men that he might, if he had pleaſed, have only given us a Law written with his own hand, as he did to the people of *Iſrael* from Mount *Sinai:* but ſuch is his Goodneſs, that he hath ſent a great Ambaſſador from Heaven to us, *God manifeſted in the Fleſh*, to declare and interpret his will and pleaſure; and not only ſo, but to fulfil that Law himſelf, the obſervation whereof he requires of us. The bare Rules of a good life are a very dead and ineffectual thing in compariſon of a living Example, which ſhews us the poſſibility and practicableneſs of our Duty; both that it may be done, and how to do it. Religion indeed did always conſiſt in an Imitation of God, and in our reſemblance of thoſe excellencies which ſhine forth in the beſt and moſt perfect Being; but we may imitate him now with much greater eaſe and advantage, ſince God was pleaſed to become man on purpoſe to ſhew us how men may become like to God. And this is one great end for which the Son of God came into the world, and *was made fleſh, and dwelt among us*, and converſed ſo long and familiarly with mankind; that in his own Perſon and Life he might give us the Example of all that holineſs and virtue which his Laws require of us. And as he was in nothing liker the Son of God than in being and doing good, ſo is he in nothing a fitter Pattern for our imitation than in that excellent Character given of him here in the Text, That *He went about doing good.*

In which words two things offer themſelves to our conſideration.

Firſt, Our Saviour's great Work and Buſineſs in the World, which was to *do good*: ὃς διῆλθεν εὐεργετῶν, who employed himſelf in being a Benefactor to Mankind This refers more eſpecially to his healiing the bodily diſeaſes and infirmities of men. *God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt and with Power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppreſſed of the Devil.* Intimating to us by this inſtance of his doing good, that he who took ſo much pains to reſcue mens Bodies from the power and poſſeſſion of the Devil, would not let their Souls remain under his tyranny. But tho the Text inſtanceth only in one particular, yet this general expreſſion of *doing good* comprehends all thoſe ſeveral ways whereby he was beneficial to mankind.

Secondly, Here is his Diligence and Induſtry in this work, *He went about doing good*; he made it the great buſineſs and conſtant employment of his life. I ſhall propound to you the Pattern of our Saviour in both theſe particulars.

I. His great Work and Buſineſs in the world was to *do good*. The moſt pleaſant and delightful, the moſt happy and glorious work in the world. It is a work of a large extent, and of an univerſal influence; and comprehends in it all thoſe ways whereby we may be uſeful and beneficial to one another. And indeed it were pity that ſo good a thing ſhould be confined within narrow bounds and limits. It reacheth to the Souls of men, and to their Bodies; and is converſant in all thoſe ways and kinds whereby we may ſerve the Temporal or Spiritual good of our Neighbour, and promote his preſent and his future happineſs. What our Bleſſed Saviour did in this kind, and we in imitation of him ought to do, I ſhall reduce to theſe two Heads. *Firſt*, Doing good to the Souls of men and endeavouring to promote their ſpiritual and eternal happineſs. *Secondly*, The procuring of their Temporal good and contributing as much as may be to their happineſs in this preſent life.

1. Doing good to the *Souls* of men and endeavouring to promote their *ſpiritual* and *eternal* happineſs, by good Inſtruction, and by good Example.

Firſt, By good *Inſtruction*. And under Inſtruction I comprehend all the means of bringing men to the knowledge of their duty, and exciting them to the practice of it; by inſtructing their Ignorance, and removing their Prejudices, and rectifying their Miſtakes, by Perſuaſion and by Reproof; and by making laſting Proviſion for the promoting of theſe ends.

By inſtructing mens Ignorance. And this is a duty which every man owes to another as he hath opportunity, but eſpecially to thoſe who are under our care and charge, our Children and Servants and near Relations, thoſe over whom we have a ſpecial authority and a more immediate influence. This our Bleſſed Saviour made his great work in the world, to inſtruct all ſorts of perſons in the things which concerned the Kingdom of God, and to direct them in the way to eternal Happineſs; by publick teaching, and by private converſation, and by taking occaſion from the common occurrences of human life, and every object that preſented it ſelf to him, to inſtil good counſel into men, and to raiſe their minds to the conſideration of divine and heavenly things. And though this was our Saviour's great Employment, and is theirs more particularly whoſe Office it is to teach others; yet every man hath private opportunities of inſtructing others, by admoniſhing them of their duty, and by directing them to the beſt means and helps of knowledge; ſuch as are Books of Piety and Religion, with which they that are rich may furniſh thoſe who are unable to provide for themſelves.

And then by removing mens Prejudices againſt the Truth, and rectifying their Miſtakes. This our Saviour found very difficult; the generality of thoſe with whom he had to do being ſtrongly prejudiced againſt Him and his Doctrine by falſe Principles, which they had taken in by Education, and been trained up to by their Teachers. And therefore he uſed a great deal of meekneſs in inſtructing thoſe that oppoſed themſelves, and exerciſed abundance of patience in bearing with the infirmities of men, and their dulneſs and ſlowneſs of capacity to receive the Truth.

And this is great Charity, to conſider the inveterate Prejudices of men; eſpecially thoſe which are rooted in education, and which men are confirmed in by the reverence they bear to thoſe that have been their Teachers. And great Allowance is to be given to men in this caſe, and time to bethink themſelves and to conſider better. For no man that is in an Error thinks he is ſo; and therefore if we go violently to rend their Opinions from them they will but hold them ſo much the faſter, but if we have patience to unrip them by degrees, they will at laſt fall in pieces of themſelves.

And when this is done, the way is open for Counſel and Perſuaſion. And this our Saviour adminiſtred in a moſt powerful and effectual manner, by encouraging men to Repentance, and by repreſenting to them the infinite advantages of obeying his Laws, and the dreadful and dangerous conſequences of breaking of them. And theſe are arguments fit to work upon Mankind, becauſe there is ſomething within us that conſents to the equity and reaſonableneſs of God's Laws. So that whenever we perſuade men to their duty, how backward ſoever they may be to the practice of it, being ſtrongly addicted to a contrary courſe, yet we have this certain advantage, that we have their Conſciences and the moſt inward ſenſe of their minds on our ſide, bearing witneſs that what we counſel and perſuade them to is for their good.

And if need be we muſt add Reproof to Counſel. This our Saviour did with great freedom, and ſometimes with ſharpneſs and ſeverity, according to the condition of the perſons he had to deal withal. But becauſe of his great Authority, being *a Teacher* immediately *ſent from God*, and of his intimate knowledge of the hearts of men, he is not a Pattern to us in all the circumſtances of diſcharging this duty; which, if any other, requires great prudence and diſcretion if we intend to do good, the only end to be aimed at in it. For many are fit to be reproved whom yet every man is not fit to reprove; and in that caſe we muſt get it done by thoſe that are fit, and great regard muſt be had to the time and other circumſtances of doing it, ſo as it may moſt probably have its effect.

I will mention but one way of Inſtruction more, and that is by making laſting proviſion for that purpoſe: as by founding Schools of Learning, eſpecially to teach the poor to read, which is the Key of Knowledge; by building of Churches and endowing them; by buying or giving in Impropriations, or the like. Theſe are large and laſting ways of teaching and inſtructing others, which will continue when we are dead and gone; as it is ſaid of *Abel*, that *being dead he yet ſpeaks*. And this our Saviour virtually did by appointing his Apoſtles after he had left the World to *go and teach all Nations*, and ordering a conſtant ſucceſſion of Teachers in his Church to inſtruct men in the Chriſtian Religion, together with an honourable Maintenance for them. This we cannot do in the way that he did who had *all power in heaven and earth*, but we may be ſubſervient to this Deſign in the ways that I have mentioned. Which I humbly commend to the conſideration of thoſe whom God hath bleſſed with great Eſtates and made capable of effecting ſuch great works of Charity.

Secondly, Another way of doing good to the Souls of men is by good *Example*. And this our Bleſſed Saviour was in the utmoſt perfection. For he *fulfilled all righteouſneſs, had no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* And this we ſhould endeavour to be, as far as the frailty of our nature and imperfection of our preſent ſtate will ſuffer. For good example is an unſpeakable benefit to mankind, and hath a ſecret power and influence upon thoſe with whom we converſe, to form them into the ſame diſpoſition and manners. It is a living Rule, that teacheth men without trouble, and lets them ſee their faults without open reproof and upbraiding. Beſides that it adds great weight to a man's counſel and perſuaſion, when we ſee that he adviſes nothing but what he does, nor exacts any thing from others, from which he himſelf deſires to be excuſed. As on the contrary, nothing is more cold and inſignificant than good counſel from a bad man, one that does not obey his own precepts, nor follow the advice which he is ſo forward to give to others.

Theſe are the ſeveral ways of doing good to the *Souls* of men, wherein we who are the Diſciples of the Bleſſed *Jeſus* ought in imitation of his Example to exerciſe our ſelves according to our ſeveral capacities and opportunities. And this is the nobleſt Charity, and the greateſt kindneſs that can be ſhewn to human nature; it is in the moſt excellent ſenſe to *give eyes to the blind*, to *ſet the priſoners at liberty*, to reſcue men out of the ſaddeſt ſlavery and captivity, and to *ſave Souls from death*. And it is the moſt laſting and durable benefit, becauſe it is to do men good to all eternity.

2. The other way of being beneficial to others is, by procuring their *Temporal* good, and contributing to their happineſs in this preſent life. And this, in ſubordination to our Saviour's great deſign of bringing men to eternal Happineſs, was a great part of his buſineſs and employment in this world. He went about *healing all manner of ſickneſſes and diſeaſes*, and reſcuing the Bodies of men from the power and poſſeſſion of the Devil.

And though we cannot be beneficial to men in that miraculous manner that he was; yet we may be ſo in the uſe of ordinary means: We may comfort the afflicted, and vindicate the oppreſſed, and do a great many acts of Charity which our Saviour by reaſon of his poverty could not do without a Miracle: We may ſupply the neceſſities of thoſe that are in want, *feed the hungry, and cloathe the naked, and viſit the ſick*, and miniſter to them ſuch comforts and remedies as they are not able to provide for themſelves: We may take a Child that is poor and deſtitute of all advantages of Education, and bring him up in the knowledge and fear of God, and without any great expence put him into a way wherein by his diligence and induſtry he may arrive to a conſiderable fortune in the world, and be able afterwards to relieve hundreds of others. Men glory in raiſing great and magnificent Structures, and find a Secret pleaſure to ſee Sets of their own planting to grow up and flouriſh: But ſurely it is a greater and more glorious work to build up a Man, to ſee a Youth of our own planting, from the ſmall beginnings and advantages we have given him, to grow up into a conſiderable fortune, to take root in the world, and to ſhoot up to ſuch a height and ſpread his branches ſo wide, that we who firſt planted him may our ſelves find comfort and ſhelter under his ſhadow. We may many times with a ſmall liberality ſhore up a Family that is ready to fall, and ſtruggles under ſuch neceſſities that it is not able to ſupport it ſelf. And if our minds were as great as ſometimes our eſtates are, we might do great and publick works of a general and laſting advantage, and for which many Generations to come might call us bleſſed. And thoſe who are in the loweſt condition may do great good to others by their Prayers, if they themſelves be as good as they ought. For *the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* The interceſſion of thoſe who are in favour with God (as all good men are) are not vain wiſhes, but many times effectual to procure that good for others which their own endeavours could never have effected and brought about.

I have done with the Firſt thing. The great Work and Buſineſs which our Bleſſed Saviour had to do in the world, and that was to *do good.* I proceed to the

II. Second thing contained in the Text, Our Saviour's Diligence and Induſtry in this work, *He went about doing good.* He made it the great buſineſs and conſtant employment of his life, he travelled from one place to another to ſeek out opportunities of being uſeful and beneficial to Mankind. And this will fully appear if we briefly conſider theſe following particulars:

Firſt, How unwearied our bleſſed Saviour was in doing good. He made it his only buſineſs, and ſpent his whole life in it. He was not only ready to do good to thoſe that came to him and gave him opportunity for it, and beſought him to do it, but went himſelf from one place to another to ſeek out objects to exerciſe his Charity upon. He went to thoſe who could not, and to thoſe who would not come to him; for ſo it is written of him, *He came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt.* He was contented to ſpend whole days in this work, to live in a croud and to be almoſt perpetually opreſt with company; and when his Diſciples were moved at the rudeneſs of the people in preſſing upon him he rebuked their impatience, and, for the pleaſure he took in doing good made nothing of the trouble and inconvenience that attended it.

Secondly, If we conſider how much he denied himſelf in the chief comforts and conveniences of human life that he might do good to others. He neglected the ordinary refreſhments of nature, his meat and drink and ſleep, that he might attend this work. He was at every bodies beck and diſpoſal to do them good. When he was doing cures in one place, he was ſent for to another, and he either went or ſent healing to them, and did by his word at a diſtance what he could not come in perſon to do. Nay he was willing to deny himſelf in one of the deareſt things in the world, his reputation and good name. He was contented to do good, though he was ill thought of and ill ſpoken of for it. He would not refuſe to do good on the Sabbath-day, though he was accounted prophane for ſo doing. He knew how ſcandalous it was among the *Jews* to keep company with *Publicans* and Sinners, and yet he would not decline ſo good a work for all the ill words they gave him for it.

Thirdly, If we conſider the malicious oppoſition and ſiniſter conſtruction that his good deeds met withall. Never did ſo much goodneſs meet with ſo much enmity, *endure* ſo many affronts and ſo much *contradiction of Sinners.* This great Benefactor of Mankind was hated and perſecuted as if he had been a publick Enemy. While he was inſtructing them in the meekeſt manner, they were ready to ſtone him for telling them the truth; and when the fame of his Miracles went abroad, though they were never ſo uſeful and beneficial to mankind, yet upon this very account, they conſpire againſt him and ſeek to take away his life. Whatever he ſaid or did, though never ſo innocent, never ſo excellent, had ſome bad interpretation put upon it, and the great and ſhining Virtues of his life were turned into Crimes and matter of accuſation. For his caſting out of Devils, he was called a Magician; for his endeavour to reclaim men from their Vices, *a Friend of Publicans and Sinners*; for his free and obliging Converſation, *a Wine-bibber and a Glutton.* All the benefits which he did to men, and the bleſſings which he ſo liberally ſhed among the people, were conſtrued to be a deſign of Ambition and Popularity, and done with an intention to move the people to Sedition, and to make himſelf a King: Enough to have diſcouraged the greateſt goodneſs, and have put a damp upon the moſt generous mind, and to make it ſick and weary of well-doing. For what more grievous than to have all the good one does ill interpreted, and the beſt actions in the world made matter of calumny and reproach?

And then laſtly, If we conſider how chearfully, notwithſtanding all this, he perſevered and continued in well-doing. It was not only his buſineſs, but his delight; *I delight* (ſays he) *to do thy will, O my God.* The pleaſure which others take in the moſt natural actions of life, in eating and drinking when they are hungry he took in doing good, it was *his meat and drink to do the will of his Father.* He plied this work with ſo much diligence as if he had been afraid he ſhould have wanted time for it. *I muſt work the work of him that ſent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.* And when he was approaching towards the hardeſt and moſt unpleaſant part of his Service, but of all others the moſt beneficial to us, I mean his death and ſufferings, he was not at eaſe in his mind till it was done; *How am I ſtraitned* (ſays he) *till it be accompliſhed.* And juſt before his Suffering, with what Joy and Triumph does he reflect upon the good he hath done in his life? *Father, I have glorified thee upon earth, and finiſhed the work which thou haſt given me to do.* What a bleſſed Pattern is here of diligence and induſtry in doing good? how fair and lovely a Copy for Chriſtians to write after?

And now that I have ſet it before you, it will be of excellent uſe to theſe two purpoſes: To ſhew us our Defects; and to excite us to our Duty.

I. To ſhew us our Defects. How does this bleſſed Example upbraid thoſe who live in a direct contradiction to it; who inſtead of *going about doing good* they are perpetually intent upon doing miſchief; who are wiſe and active to do evil, but to do good have no inclination, no underſtanding? And thoſe likewiſe who, though they are far from being ſo bad, yet wholly neglect this bleſſed work of doing good? They think it very fair to do no evil, to hurt and injure no man: but if Preachers will be ſo unreaſonable as to require more, and will never be ſatisfied till they have perſuaded them out of their eſtate, and to give to the poor till they have almoſt impoveriſh'd themſelves, they deſire to be excuſed from this importunity. But we are not ſo unreaſonable neither. We deſire to put them in mind, that to be charitable according to our power is an indiſpenſible duty of Religion: that we are commanded not only to abſtain from evil, but to do good; and that our Bleſſed Saviour hath given us the Example of both; he did not only *do no ſin,* but *he went about doing good*; And upon this nice point it was that the young rich man in the Goſpel and his Saviour parted. He had *kept the Commandments from his youth, Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not commit adultery, Thou ſhalt not ſteal:* he had been very careful of the negative part of Religion; But, when it came to parting with his Eſtate and *giving to the poor,* this he thought too hard a condition, and upon this he forſook our Saviour and forfeited the Kingdom of Heaven. And it is very conſiderable, and ought to be often and ſeriouſly thought upon, that our Saviour deſcribing to us the Day of Judgment repreſents the great Judge of the world acquitting and condemning men according to the good which they had done, or neglected to do in ways of mercy and charity; for feeding the hungry and cloathing the naked, and viſiting the ſick, or for neglecting to do theſe things: Than which nothing can more plainly and effectually declare to us the neceſſity of doing good in order to the obtaining eternal Happineſs.

There are many indeed who do not altogether neglect the doing of this work, who yet do in a great meaſure prevent and hinder themſelves from doing it as they ought, under a pretence of being employed about other Duties and parts of Religion. They are ſo taken up with the exerciſes of Piety and Devotion in private and publick, with Prayer, and reading and hearing Sermons, and preparing themſelves for the Sacrament, that they have ſcarce any leiſure to mind the doing of good and charitable offices to others: or if they have, they hope God will pardon his ſervants in this thing, and accept of their Piety and Devotion inſtead of all. But they ought to conſider, that when theſe two parts of Religion come in competition, Devotion is to give way to Charity, *Mercy* being better than *Sacrifice*: That the great End of all the Duties of Religion, Prayer, and reading and hearing the Word of God, and receiving the holy Sacrament is to diſpoſe and excite us to do good, to make us more ready and forward to every good work: and that it is the greateſt mockery in the world, upon pretence of uſing the means of Religion to neglect the end of it; and becauſe we are always preparing our ſelves to do good, to think that we are for ever excuſed from doing any.

Others are taken up in contending for the Faith, and ſpend all their zeal and heat about ſome Controverſies in Religion; and therefore they think it but reaſonable that they ſhould be excuſed from thoſe meaner kind of Duties, becauſe they ſerve God, as they imagine, in a higher and more excellent way; as thoſe who ſerve the King in his Wars uſe to be exempted from Taxes and Offices. But do thoſe men conſider upon what kind of Duties more eſpecially our Bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles lay the great weight and ſtreſs of Religion? that it is to the Meek, and Merciful, and Peaceable that our Saviour pronounceth Bleſſedneſs? that *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To viſit the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction?* that *the wiſdom which is from above is full of mercy and good works?* Theſe are the great and weighty things of Religion, which, whatever elſe we do, ought not to be left undone. Do they conſider, that a right Faith is wholly in order to a good Life, and is of no value any further than it hath an influence upon it? So that whatever other Duties we may be obliged to, nothing can excuſe us from this. How much better is it to do good, to be really uſeful and beneficial to others, and how much more clearly and certainly our duty, than to quarrel about doubtful and uncertain opinions? Were men Chriſtians indeed they would be ſo much delighted and taken up with this better work (more acceptable to God, and more profitable to men) that they could not find leiſure, or if they could, they could not find in their hearts to employ all their time and zeal about things which are at ſo great a diſtance from the life and heart of Religion, as moſt of thoſe Queſtions are which Chriſtians at this day contend and languiſh about. Were we poſſeſſed with the true ſpirit of Chriſtianity, theſe would be but dry and inſipid and taſtleſs things to us, in compariſon of the bleſſed employment of doing good in a more real and ſubſtantial way. If the ſincere love of God and our Neighbour were but once throughly kindled in our hearts, theſe pure and heavenly flames would in a great meaſure extinguiſh the unchriſtian heats of diſpute and contention; as Fires here below are ready to languiſh and go out, when the Sun in his full ſtrength ſhines upon them.

II. But the hardeſt part of my task is yet behind, and it is ſtrange it ſhould be ſo; and that is to perſuade us to the imitation of this bleſſed Example. Let us *go and do likewiſe*; *let the ſame mind be in us that was in Chriſt Jeſus*; let us tread in the ſteps of the great God and the beſt man that ever was, our Bleſſed Saviour, who *went about doing good.* Methinks the work it ſelf is of that nature, that men ſhould not need to be courted to it by perſuaſion, nor urged by importunity. The very propoſal of the thing, and the Pattern which I have ſet before you, is temptation and allurement enough to a generous and well-diſpoſed mind. But yet to inflame you the more to ſo good a work, be pleaſed to dwell with me a little upon theſe following Conſiderations:

Firſt, It is an argument of a great and generous mind, to employ our ſelves in doing good, to extend our thoughts and care to the concernments of others, and to uſe our power and endeavours for their benefit and advantage; becauſe it ſhews an inclination and deſire in us to have others happy as well as our ſelves.

Thoſe who are of a narrow and envious ſpirit, of a mean and ſordid diſpoſition, love to contract themſelves within themſelves, and like the *Hedgehog* to ſhoot out their quills at every one that comes near them. They take care of no body but themſelves, and fooliſhly think their own Happineſs the greater becauſe they have it alone and to themſelves. But the nobleſt and moſt heavenly diſpoſitions think themſelves happieſt when others ſhare with them in their happineſs. Of all Beings God is the fartheſt removed from Envy, and the nearer any Creature approacheth to him in bleſſedneſs the farther is it off from this helliſh quality and diſpoſition. It is the temper of the Devil to grudge happineſs to others, he envied that man ſhould be in Paradiſe when He was caſt out of Heaven.

Other Perfections are (as one ſays) of a more melancholick and ſolitary diſpoſition, and ſhine brighteſt when they are alone, or attained to but by a few; once make them common and they loſe their luſtre. But it is the nature of goodneſs to communicate it ſelf, and the farther it ſpreads the more glorious it is. God reckons it as one of his moſt glorious Titles, as the brighteſt Gem in his Diadem, *The Lord mighty to ſave.* He delights not to ſhew his Sovereignty in ruining the Innocent and deſtroying helpleſs Creatures; but in reſcuing them out of the jaws of Hell and Deſtruction. To the Devil belongs the Title of the *Deſtroyer.*

Without this quality of goodneſs all other Perfections would change their nature, and loſe their excellency. Great Power and Wiſdom would be terrible, and raiſe nothing but dread, and ſuſpicion in us: For Power without Goodneſs would be Tiranny and Oppreſſion, and Wiſdom would become Craft and Treachery. A Being endued with Knowledge and Power, and yet wanting Goodneſs, would be nothing elſe but an irreſtible Evil, and an omnipotent Miſchief. We admire Knowledge, and are afraid of Power, and ſuſpect Wiſdom: but we can heartily love nothing but Goodneſs, or ſuch Perfections as are in conjunction wlth it. For Knowledge and Power may be in a nature moſt contrary to God's; the Devil hath theſe perfections in an excelling degree. When all is done, nothing argues a great and generous mind but only Goodneſs; which is a propenſion and diſpoſition to make others happy, and a readineſs to do them all the good offices we can.

Secondly, To do Good is the moſt pleaſant employment in the World. It is natural; and whatever is ſo is delightful. We do like our ſelves whenever we relieve the wants and diſtreſſes of others. And therefore this Virtue among all other hath peculiarly entituled it ſelf to the name of *Humanity.* We anſwer our own Nature, and obey our Reaſon and ſhew our ſelves Men in ſhewing mercy to the miſerable. Whenever we conſider the evils and afflictions of others, we do with the greateſt reaſon collect our Duty from our nature and inclination, and make our own wiſhes and deſires and expectations from others a law and rule to our ſelves. And this is pleaſant, to follow our nature, and to gratify the importunate dictates of our own Reaſon. So that the benefits we do to others are not more welcome to them that receive them, than they are delightful to us that do them. We eaſe our own nature and bowels, whenever we help and relieve thoſe who are in want and neceſſity. As on the contrary, no man that hath not diveſted himſelf of humanity can be cruel and hard-hearted to others without feeling ſome pain in himſelf. There is no ſenſual pleaſure in the world comparable to the delight and ſatisfaction that a good man takes in doing good. This *Cato* in *Tully* boaſts of as the great comfort and joy of his old age, *That nothing was more pleaſant to him than the Conſcience of a well ſpent life, and the remembrance of many benefits and kindneſſes done to others.* Senſual pleaſures are not laſting, but preſently vaniſh and expire; but that is not the worſt of them, they leave a ſting behind them, as the pleaſure goes off.

——*Succedit frigida cura.*

Sadneſs and melancholy come in the place of it, guilt and trouble and repentance follow it. But the pleaſure of doing good remains after a thing is done, the thoughts of it lie eaſy in our minds, and the reflection upon it afterwards does for ever miniſter joy and delight to us. In a word, that frame of mind which inclines us to do good is the very temper and diſpoſition of happineſs. *Solomon*, after all his experience of worldly pleaſures, pitches at laſt upon this as the greateſt felicity of human life, and the only good uſe that is to be made of a proſperous and plentiful fortune, *Eccl.* 3. 12. *I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life.* And a greater and a wiſer than *Solomon* had ſaid that *it is more bleſſed to give than to receive.*

Thirdly, To employ our ſelves in doing good is to imitate the higheſt Excellency and Perfection. It is to be like God *who is good and doth good,* and to be like him in that which he eſteems his greateſt glory, and that is, his Goodneſs. It is to be like the Son of God who when he took our nature upon him, and lived in the World, *went about doing good.* It is to be like the bleſſed Angels, whoſe great employment it is to be *miniſtring Spirits for the good of others.* To be charitable and helpful and beneficial to others, is to be a good Angel and a Saviour and a God to men. And the Example of our bleſſed Saviour more eſpecially is the great Pattern which our Religion propounds to us. And we have all the reaſon in the world to be in love with it; becauſe that very goodneſs which it propounds to our imitation, was ſo beneficial to our ſelves: when we our ſelves feel and enjoy the happy effects of that good which he did in the world, this ſhould mightily endear the Example to us, and make us forward to imitate that love and kindneſs to which we are indebted for ſo many bleſſings, and upon which all our hopes of happineſs do depend.

And there is this conſiderable difference between our Saviour's Charity to us, and ours to others: He did all purely for our ſakes and for our benefit, whereas all the good we do to others is a greater good done to our ſelves. They indeed are beholden to us for the kindneſs we do them, and we to them for the opportunity of doing it. Every ignorant perſon that comes in our way to be inſtructed by us, every ſinner whom we reclaim, every poor man we relieve, is a happy opportunity of doing good to our ſelves, and of *laying up for our ſelves a good treaſure againſt the time which is to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life.* By this principle the beſt and the happieſt man that ever was, governed his life and actions, eſteeming it *a more bleſſed thing to give than to receive.*

Fourthly, This is one of the greateſt and moſt ſubſtantial Duties of Religion; and next to the love and honour which we pay to God himſelf, the moſt acceptable ſervice that we can perform to him. It is one half of the Law, and next to the firſt and great Commandment, and very like unto it: like to it in the excellency of its nature, and in the neceſſity of its obligation. For *this commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God love his brother alſo.* The firſt Commandment excells in the dignity of the object; but the ſecond hath the advantage in the reality of its effects. For *our righteouſneſs extendeth not to God,* we can do him no real benefit: but our Charity to men is really uſeful and beneficial to them. For which reaſon God is contented, in many caſes, that the external Honour and Worſhip which by his poſitive command he requires of us, ſhould give way to that natural duty of Love and Mercy which we owe to one another. And to ſhew how great a value he puts upon Charity, he hath made it the great teſtimony of our love to himſelf; and for want of it, rejects all other profeſſions of love to him as falſe and inſincere. *If any man ſay, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?*

Fifthly, This is that which will give us the greateſt comfort when we come to die. It will then be no pleaſure to men to reflect upon the greateſt eſtates they have got, and the great places they have been advanced to, becauſe they are leaving theſe things, and they will ſtand them in no ſtead in the other world: *Riches profit not in the day of wrath*: But the conſcience of well-doing will refreſh our Souls even under the very pangs of death. With what contentment does a good man then look upon the good he hath done in his life? and with what confidence doth he look over into the other world, where he hath provided for himſelf *bags that wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens that faileth not*? For though our eſtates will not follow us into the other World, our good works will; though we cannot carry our riches along with us, yet we may ſend them before us to make way for our reception into everlaſting habitations. In ſhort, works of Mercy and Charity will comfort us at the hour of death, and plead for us at the day of Judgment, and procure for us at the hands of a Merciful God a Glorious recompence at the reſurrection of the juſt. Which leads me to the

Laſt conſideration I ſhall offer to you; which is the reward of doing good both in this world and the other. If we believe God himſelf, he hath made more particular and encouraging promiſes to this grace and virtue than to any other.

The advantages of it in This World are many and great. It is the way to derive a laſting bleſſing upon our eſtates. Acts of Charity are the beſt Deeds of Settlement. We gain the prayers and bleſſings of thoſe to whom we extend our charity, and it is no ſmall thing to have *the bleſſing of them that are ready to periſh to come upon us.* For God *hears the prayers of the deſtitute, and his ear is open to their Cry.* Charity is a great ſecurity to us in times of evil: and that not only from the ſpecial promiſe and providence of God, which are engaged to preſerve from want thoſe that relieve the neceſſities of others; but likewiſe from the nature of the thing, which makes way for its own reward in this world. He that is charitable to others provides makes a ſupply and retreat for himſelf in the day of diſtreſs: For he provokes mankind by his example to like tenderneſs towards him, and prudently beſpeaks the commiſeration of others againſt it comes to be his turn to ſtand in need of it. Nothing in this world makes a man more and ſurer Friends than Charity and Bounty, and ſuch as will ſtand by us in the greateſt troubles and dangers. *For a good man* (ſays the Apoſtle) *one would even dare to die.* 'Tis excellent counſel of the Son of *Sirach*; *Lay up thy treaſure according to the Commandment of the moſt High, and it ſhall bring thee more profit than gold. Shut up thy Alms in thy ſtore-houſe, and it ſhall deliver thee from all affliction: It ſhall fight for thee againſt thine enemies, better than a mighty Shield and ſtrong Spear.* It hath ſometimes happened that the obligation that men have laid upon others by their Charity, hath in caſe of danger and extremity done them more kindneſs than all the reſt of their Eſtate could do for them; and their Alms have literally delivered them from death.

But what is all this to the endleſs and unſpeakable Happineſs of the Next life, where the returns of doing good will be vaſtly great beyond what we can now expect or imagine? For God takes all the good we do to others as a debt upon himſelf, and he hath eſtate and treaſure enough to ſatisfy the greateſt obligations we can lay upon Him. So that we have the Truth, and Goodneſs, and ſufficiency of God for our ſecurity, that what we ſcatter and ſow in this kind will grow up to a plentiful harveſt in the other world; and that all our pains and expence in doing good for a few days will be recompenced and crowned with the Joys and Glories of Eternity.

SERMON

SERMON XIX.

ON THE

Fifth of November, 1678.

Before the Honourable

Houſe of Commons.

LUKE ix. 55, 56.

But he turned and rebuked them, and ſaid, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; For the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.

AMONG many other things, which may juſtly recommend the *Chriſtian Religion* to the approbation of mankind, the intrinſick goodneſs of it is moſt apt to make impreſſion upon the Minds of ſerious and conſiderate men. The Miracles of it are the great external evidence and confirmation of its Truth and Divinity; but the morality of its Doctrines and Precepts, ſo agreeable to the beſt reaſon and wiſeſt apprehenſions of mankind, ſo admirably fitted for the perfecting of our natures, and the ſweetning of the ſpirits and tempers of Men, ſo friendly to human Society, and every way ſo well calculated for the peace and order of the World. Theſe are the things which our Religion glories in as her crown and excellency. *Miracles* are apt to awaken and aſtoniſh, and by a ſenſible and overpowering evidence to bear down the prejudices of Infidelity; but there are ſecret charms in *goodneſs* which take faſt hold of the hearts of men and do inſenſibly, but effectually, command our love and eſteem.

And ſurely nothing can be more proper to the occaſion of this Day, than a Diſcourſe upon this Argument; which ſo directly tends to correct that unchriſtian ſpirit, and miſtaken zeal, which hath been the cauſe of all our troubles and confuſions, and had ſo powerful an influence upon that horrid Tragedy which was deſigned, now near upon fourſcore years ago, to have been acted as upon this Day.

And that we may the better underſtand the reaſon of our Saviour's reproof here in the Text, it will be requiſite to conſider the occaſion of this hot and furious zeal which appeared in ſome of his Diſciples. And that was this; Our Saviour was going from *Galilee* to *Jeruſalem*, and being to paſs through a Village of *Samaria* he ſent meſſengers before him to prepare entertainment for him; but the People of that Place would not receive him, becauſe he was going to *Jeruſalem*: the Reaſon whereof was, the *difference of Religion* which then was between the *Jews* and the *Samaritans*. Of which I ſhall give you this brief account.

The *Samaritans* were originally that Colony of the *Aſſyrians*, which we find in the Book of *Kings* was, upon the Captivity of the Ten Tribes, planted in *Samaria* by *Salmanaſſar*. They were Heathens, and worſhipped their own Idols, till they were ſo infeſted with Lions, that for the redreſs of this miſchief they deſired to be inſtructed in the worſhip of the God of *Iſrael*, hoping by this means to appeaſe the anger of the God of the Country; and then they worſhipped the God of *Iſrael* together with their own Idols; for ſo it is ſaid in the Hiſtory of the *Kings*, That *they feared the Lord, and ſerved their own Gods.*

After the Tribe of *Judah* were returned from the Captivity of *Babylon*, and the Temple of *Jeruſalem* was rebuilt, all the *Jews* were obliged by a ſolemn Covenant to put away their *Heathen* Wives. It happened that *Manaſſes*, a *Jewiſh* Prieſt, had married the Daughter of *Sanballat* the *Samaritan*; and being unwilling to put away his Wife, *Sanballat* excited the *Samaritans* to build a Temple upon Mount *Gerizim* near the City of *Samaria*, in oppoſition to the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, and made *Manaſſes* his Son-in-law, Prieſt there.

Upon the building of this new Temple there aroſe a great feud between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*, which in proceſs of time grew to ſo violent a hatred that they would not ſo much as ſhew common civility to one another. And this was the reaſon why the *Samaritans* would not receive our Saviour in his journey, becauſe they perceived he was going to worſhip at *Jeruſalem*.

At this uncivil uſage of our Saviour, *two* of his Diſciples, *James* and *John*, preſently take fire, and out of a well-meaning zeal for the honour of their Maſter, and of the true God, and of *Jeruſalem* the true place of his worſhip, they are immediately for diſpatching out of the way theſe Enemies of God, and Chriſt, and the true Religion; theſe *Hereticks* and *Schiſmaticks*, for ſo they called one another. And to this end they deſire our Saviour to give them power to *call for fire from Heaven to conſume them*, as *Elias* had done in a like caſe, and that too not far from *Samaria*; and it is not improbable that their being ſo near the place where *Elias* had done the like before, might prompt them to this requeſt.

Our Saviour ſeeing them in this heat, notwithſtanding all the reaſons they pretended for their paſſion, and for all they ſheltered themſelves under the great Example of *Elias*, doth very calmly but ſeverely reprove this temper of theirs, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: for the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them.*

Grotius obſerves, that theſe two excellent Sentences are left out in a *Manuſcript* that is in *England*. I cannot tell what *Manuſcript* he refers to, but if it were a Copy written out in the height of Popery, no wonder if ſome zealous Tranſcriber offended at this paſſage, ſtruck it out of the Goſpel, being confident our Saviour would not ſay any thing, that was ſo directly contrary to the current Doctrine and Practice of thoſe times. But thanks be to God this admirable ſaying is ſtill preſerved, and can never be made uſe of upon a fitter occaſion.

Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of: That is, Ye own your ſelves to be my Diſciples, but do you conſider what ſpirit now acts and governs you; Not *that* ſurely which my Doctrine deſigns to mould and faſhion you into, which is not a furious and perſecuting and deſtructive ſpirit, but mild and gentle and ſaving; tender of the lives and intereſts of men, even of thoſe who are our greateſt Enemies: You ought to conſider, That you are not now under the rough and ſowr Diſpenſation of the Law, but the calm and peaceable Inſtitution of the Goſpel; to which the ſpirit of *Elias*, though he was a very good man in his time, would be altogether unſuitable. God permitted it then, under that imperfect way of Religion, but now under the Goſpel it would be intolerable: For that deſigns univerſal love, and peace, and good-will: and now no difference of Religion, no pretence of zeal for God and Chriſt can warrant and juſtifie this paſſionate and fierce, this vindictive and exterminating ſpirit.

For the Son of Man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them. He ſays indeed elſewhere, that he *was not come to ſend Peace, but a Sword*; which we are not to underſtand of the natural tendency of his Religion, but of the accidental event and effect of it, through the malice and perverſeneſs of men: But here he ſpeaks of the proper intention and deſign of his coming: *He* came not to kill and deſtroy, but *for the healing of the Nations*; for the ſalvation and redemption of Mankind, not only *from the wrath to come*, but from a great part of the evils and miſeries of this life: *He* came to diſcountenance all fierceneſs and rage and cruelty in men, one towards another; to reſtrain and ſubdue that furious and unpeaceable Spirit, which is ſo troubleſome to the world, and the cauſe of ſo many miſchiefs and diſorders in it: And to introduce a Religion which conſults not only the eternal Salvation of mens ſouls, but their temporal peace and ſecurity, their comfort and happineſs in this world.

The *words* thus explained contain this Obſervation, *That a revengeful and cruel and deſtructive Spirit, is directly contrary to the deſign and temper of the Goſpel, and not to be excuſed upon any pretence of zeal for God and Religion.*

In the proſecution of this Argument, I ſhall confine my Diſcourſe to theſe *Three* heads.

Firſt, To ſhew the oppoſition of this ſpirit to the true Spirit and deſign of the Chriſtian Religion.

Secondly, The unjuſtifiableneſs of it upon any pretence of zeal for God and Religion.

Thirdly, To apply this Diſcourſe to the occaſion of this day.

I. *Firſt*, I ſhall ſhew *the oppoſition of this ſpirit to the true Spirit and deſign of the Chriſtian Religion*: That it is directly oppoſite to the main and fundamental *Precepts* of the Goſpel, and to the great *Paterns* and Examples of our Religion, our *Bleſſed Saviour*, and the *Primitive Chriſtians*.

1. This ſpirit which our Saviour here reproves in his Diſciples, is directly oppoſite to the main and fundamental *Precepts* of the Goſpel; which command us to *love one another*, and *to love all men*, even our very *enemies*; and are ſo far from permitting us to perſecute thoſe who hate us, that they forbid us to hate thoſe who perſecute us: They require us to be *merciful as our Father which is in Heaven is merciful*; to be *kind* and *tender-hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel againſt any, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven us*:

And *to put on as the elect of God, bowels of mercy, meekneſs and long ſuffering,* and to *follow peace with all men,* and to *ſhew all meekneſs to all men*; and particularly the Paſtors and Governors of the Church are eſpecially charged to be of this temper, *The ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men; apt to teach, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.* To all which *Precepts,* and many more that I might reckon up, nothing can be more plainly oppoſite than inhumane Cruelties and Perſecutions, treacherous Conſpiracies and bloody Maſſacres, a barbarous Inquiſition, and a *holy League* to extirpate all that differ from us. And inſtead of *inſtructing in meekneſs thoſe that oppoſe themſelves,* to convert men with fire and faggot, and to teach them as *Gideon* did the *men of Succoth with briars and thorns*; and inſtead of waiting for their repentance, and endeavouring to recover them out of the ſnare of the Devil, to put them quick into his hands, and to diſpatch them to Hell as faſt as is poſſible. If the precepts of Chriſtianity can be contradicted, ſurely it cannot be done more groſly and palpably than by ſuch practiſes.

2. This ſpirit is likewiſe directly oppoſite to the great *Paterns* and Examples of our Religion, *our Bleſſed Saviour,* and the *Primitive Chriſtians.* It was propheſied of our *Saviour* that he ſhould be *the Prince of peace,* and ſhould make it one of his great buſineſſes upon earth, to make Peace in Heaven and Earth, to reconcile Men to God and to one another, to take up all thoſe feuds and to extinguiſh all thoſe animoſities that were in the World; to bring to agreement and a peaceable demeanor one towards another thoſe that were moſt diſtant in their tempers and intereſts, to *make the lamb and the wolf lye down together, that there might be no more deſtroying nor devouring in all God's holy mountain; that is,* that *that* cruel and deſtructive ſpirit which prevail'd before in the world ſhould then be baniſhed out of all Chriſtian ſocieties.

And in conformity to theſe predictions, when our Saviour was born into the world the Angels ſang that heavenly *Anthem, Glory to God in the higheſt, peace on earth, and good will among men.* And when he appeared in the world his whole life and carriage was gentle and peaceable, full of meekneſs and charity. His great buſineſs was to be beneficial to others, to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt; *he went about doing good,* to the bodies and to the ſouls of men: his miracles were not deſtructive to mankind, but healing and charitable. He could, if he had pleaſed, by his miraculous power have confounded his enemies, and have thundred out death and deſtruction againſt the Infidel World, as his pretended *Vicar* hath ſince done againſt Hereticks. But intending that his Religion ſhould be propagated in human ways, and that Men ſhould be drawn to the profeſſion of it by the *bands of love,* and the *cords of a man,* by the gentle and peaceable methods of Reaſon and Perſwaſion; he gave no example of a furious zeal and religious rage againſt thoſe who deſpiſed his Doctrine. It was propounded to men for their great advantage, and they rejected it at their utmoſt peril. It ſeemed good to the Author of this inſtitution to compell no man to it by temporal puniſhments. When he went about making proſelytes he offered violence to no man, only ſaid, *If any man will be my diſciple, If any man will come after me.* And when his diſciples were leaving him he does not ſet up an Inquiſition to torture and puniſh them for their defection from the faith, only ſays, *Will ye alſo go away?*

And in imitation of this bleſſed Patern the Chriſtian Church continued to ſpeak and act for ſeveral Ages. And this was the language of the holy Fathers, *Lex nova non ſe vindicat ultore gladio*, the Chriſtian Law doth not avenge it ſelf by the Sword. This was then the ſtyle of Councils, *Nemini ad credendum vim inferre*, to offer violence to no man to compell him to the Faith. I proceed in the

II. *Second* place, to ſhew the *Unjuſtifiableneſs of this ſpirit upon any pretence whatſoever of zeal for God and Religion.* No caſe can be put with Circumſtances of greater advantage and more likely to juſtifie this ſpirit and temper, than the caſe here in the Text. Thoſe againſt whom the Diſciples would have *called for fire from Heaven*, were Hereticks and Schiſmaticks from the true Church; they had affronted our Saviour himſelf in his own perſon; the honour of God, and of that Religion which he had ſet up in the World, and of *Jeruſalem* which he had appointed for the place of his worſhip were all concerned in this caſe: ſo that if ever it were warrantable to put on this fierce and furious zeal, here was a caſe that ſeemed to require it; But even in theſe circumſtances our Saviour thinks fit to rebuke and diſcountenance this ſpirit, *Ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of.* And he gives ſuch a reaſon as ought in all differences of Religion, how wide ſoever they be, to deter men from this temper, *For the Son of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them*; that is, this Spirit is utterly inconſiſtent with the great deſign of Chriſtian Religion, and the end of our Saviour's coming into the world.

And now, what hath the Church of *Rome* to plead for her cruelty to men for the cauſe of Religion, which the Diſciples might not much better have pleaded for themſelves in their caſe? what hath ſhe to ſay againſt thoſe who are the objects of her cruelty and perſecution, which would not have held againſt the *Samaritans*? Does ſhe practice theſe ſeverities out of a zeal for truth, and for the honour of God, and Chriſt, and the true Religion? Why, upon theſe very accounts it was, that the Diſciples would have called for *fire from Heaven* to have deſtroyed the *Samaritans*. Is the Church of *Rome* perſwaded that thoſe whom ſhe perſecutes are Hereticks and Schiſmaticks, and that no puniſhment can be too great for ſuch offenders? So the Diſciples were perſwaded of the *Samaritans*; and upon much better grounds: Only the Diſciples had ſome excuſe in their caſe, which the Church of *Rome* hath not; and that was Ignorance: And this Apology our Saviour makes for them, *ye know not what manner of ſpirit ye are of*: They had been bred up in the Jewiſh Religion, which gave ſome indulgence to this kind of temper, and they were able to cite a great Example for themſelves; beſides, they were then but learners and not throughly inſtructed in the Chriſtian Doctrine. But in the Church of *Rome*, whatever the caſe of particular perſons may be, as to the whole Church and the Governing part of it, this ignorance is wilful and affected, and therefore inexcuſable. For the Chriſtian Religion, which they profeſs to embrace, does as plainly teach the contrary as it does any other matter whatſoever: and it is not more evident in the new Teſtament that Chriſt died for ſinners, than that Chriſtians ſhould not kill one another for the misbelief of any Article of *Revealed* Religion; much leſs for the disbelief of ſuch Articles as are *invented* by men, and impoſed as the Doctrines of Chriſt.

You have heard what kind of *Spirit* it is, which our Saviour here reproves in his Diſciples. It was a furious and deſtructive *Spirit*, contrary to Chriſtian charity and goodneſs. But yet this may be ſaid in mitigation of their fault, that they themſelves offered no violence to their enemies: They left it to God, and no doubt would have been very glad that he would have manifeſted his ſeverity upon them, by ſending down *fire from Heaven* to have conſumed them.

But there is a much worſe *Spirit* than this in the world, which is not only contrary to *Chriſtianity*, but to the common Principles of *Natural Religion*, and even to *Humanity* it ſelf: Which by falſhood and perfidiouſneſs, by ſecret plots and conſpiracies, or by open ſedition and rebellion, by an Inquiſition or Maſſacre, by depoſing and killing Kings, by fire and ſword, by the ruine of their Country, and betraying it into the hands of Foreigners; and in a word, by diſſolving all the bonds of humane Society, and ſubverting the peace and order of the World, *that is*, by all the wicked ways imaginable both to incite men to promote and advance their Religion. As if all the world were made for *them*, and there were not only no other Chriſtians, but no other Men beſide themſelves; as *Babylon* of old proudly vaunted, *I am, and there is none beſides me*: And as if the God, whom the Chriſtians worſhip, were not *the God of order but of confuſion*; as if he whom we call *the Father of mercies*, were delighted with cruelty, and could not have a more pleaſing ſacrifice offered to him than a Maſſacre, nor put a greater honour upon his Prieſts than to make them Judges of an Inquiſition, *that is*, the Inventors and decreers of torments for men more righteous and innocent than themſelves.

Thus to miſrepreſent God and Religion, is to deveſt them of all their Majeſty and Glory. For if that of *Seneca* be true, that *ſine bonitate nulla majeſtas*, *without Goodneſs there can be no ſuch thing as Majeſty*, then to ſeparate *goodneſs* and *mercy* from God, *compaſſion* and *charity* from Religion, is to make the *two* beſt things in the world, *God* and *Religion* good for nothing.

How much righter apprehenſions had the *Heathen* of the *Divine Nature*, which they looked upon as ſo benign and beneficial to mankind, that (as *Tully* admirably ſays) *Dii immortales ad uſum hominum fabrefacti penè videantur*, *The nature of the immortal Gods may almoſt ſeem to be exactly framed for the benefit and advantage of men.* And as for *Religion*, they always ſpake of it as the great band of humane Society, and the foundation of truth and fidelity, and juſtice among men. But when Religion once comes to ſupplant moral Righteouſneſs, and to teach men the abſurdeſt things in the world, *to lye for the truth, and to kill men for God's ſake*: when it ſerves to no other purpoſe, but to be a bond of conſpiracy, to inflame the tempers of men to a greater fierceneſs, and to ſet a keener edge upon their ſpirits, and to make them *ten times more the children of wrath* and Cruelty *than they were by nature*, then ſurely it loſes its nature and ceaſes to be *Religion*: For let any man ſay worſe of *Atheiſm* and *Infidelity*, if he can. And, for God's ſake, what is Religion good for, but to reform the manners and diſpoſitions of men, to reſtrain humane nature from violence and cruelty, from falſhood and treachery, from Sedition and Rebellion? Better it were there were no *revealed* Religion, and that humane nature were left to the conduct of its own principles and inclinations, which are much more mild and merciful, much more for the peace and happineſs of humane Society; than to be acted by a Religion that inſpires men with ſo wild a fury, and prompts them to commit ſuch outrages: and is continually ſupplanting Government, and undermining the welfare of mankind; in ſhort, ſuch a Religion as teaches men to propagate and advance it ſelf by *means* ſo evidently contrary to the very *nature* and *end* of all Religion.

And this, if it be well conſidered, will appear to be a very convincing way of reaſoning, by ſhewing the laſt reſult and conſequence of ſuch Principles, and of ſuch a Train of Propoſitions, to be a moſt groſs and palpable abſurdity. *For example,* We will at preſent admit *Popery* to be the true Religion, and their Doctrines of *extirpating Hereticks,* of the lawfulneſs of *depoſing Kings,* and ſubverting Government by all the cruel and wicked ways that can be thought of, to be, as in truth they are, the Doctrines of this Religion: In this Caſe, I would not trouble my ſelf to debate particulars: but if in the groſs, and upon the whole matter it be evident that ſuch a Religion as this is as bad or worſe than Infidelity and no Religion, this is conviction enough to a wiſe man, and as good as a Demonſtration, that this is not the true Religion, and that it cannot be from God.

How much better Teachers of Religion were the old *Heathen Philoſophers?* In all whoſe Books and Writings there is not one Principle to be found of Treachery or Rebellion; nothing that gives the leaſt countenance to an *Aſſociation* or a Maſſacre, to the betraying of ones Native Country, or the cutting of his Neighbours throat for difference in opinion. I ſpeak it with grief and ſhame, becauſe the credit of our common Chriſtianity is ſomewhat concerned in it, that *Panatius* and *Antipatur* and *Diogenes* the *Stoick, Tully* and *Plutarch* and *Seneca* were much honeſter and more Chriſtian *Caſuiſts,* than the *Jeſuits* are, or the generality of the *Caſuiſts* of any other *Order,* that I know of, in the Church of *Rome.* I come now in the

Third and laſt place, to make ſome *Application* of this Diſcourſe. III.

1. Let not Religion ſuffer for thoſe faults and miſcarriages which really proceeed from the ignorance of Religion, and from the want of it. That under colour and pretence of Religion, very bad things are done, is no argument that Religion it ſelf is not good: Becauſe the beſt things are liable to be perverted and abuſed to very ill purpoſes, nay *the corruption of them is commonly the worſt*; as, they ſay, the richeſt and nobleſt Wines make the ſharpeſt Vinegar. *If the light that is in you,* ſaith our Saviour, *be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?*

2. Let us beware of that *Church* which countenanceth this *unchriſtian ſpirit* here condemned by our Saviour; and which teaches us ſuch *Doctrines,* and warrants ſuch *Practices* as are conſonant thereto. You all know, without my ſaying ſo, that I mean the Church of *Rome*; in which are taught ſuch *Doctrines* as theſe, That Hereticks, *that is,* all who differ from them in matters of Faith, are to be extirpated by fire and ſword; which was decreed in the *third* and *fourth Lateran* Councils, where all Chriſtians are ſtrictly charged to endeavour this to the uttermoſt of their power, *Sicut reputari cupiunt & haberi fideles, as they deſire to be eſteemed and accounted Chriſtians.* Next their *Doctrines of depoſing Kings,* and of *abſolving their ſubjects from obedience to them*; which were not only univerſally believed, but practiſed by the *Popes* and *Roman* Church for ſeveral Ages. Indeed this Doctrine hath not been at all times alike frankly and openly avowed, but it is undoubtedly theirs; and hath frequently been put in execution, though they have not thought it ſo convenient at all turns to make profeſſion of it. It is a certain kind of Engine, which is to be ſcrew'd up or let down as occaſion ſerves; and is commonly kept like *Goliah*'s Sword in the *Sanctuary* behind the *Ephod,* but yet ſo that the *High-Prieſt* can lend it out upon an extraordinary occaſion.

And for *Practices* conſonant to theſe *Doctrines*, I ſhall go no further than the horrid and bloody *Deſign* of this *Day*. Such a *Myſtery* of Iniquity, as had been hid from *ages and generations*; Such a Maſter-piece of Villany, *as eye had not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor ever* before *entred into the heart of man:* So prodigiouſly Barbarous, both in the ſubſtance and circumſtances of it, as is not to be parallell'd in all the voluminous Records of Time, from the foundation of the World.

Of late years our *Adverſaries* (for ſo they have made themſelves without any provocation of ours) have almoſt had the impudence to deny ſo plain a matter of fact; but I wiſh they have not taken an effectual courſe by freſh Conſpiracies, of equal or greater horror, to confirm the belief of it with a witneſs. But I ſhall not anticipate what will be more proper for another *Day*, but confine my ſelf to the preſent Occaſion.

I will not trouble you with the particular Narrative of this dark Conſpiracy, nor the obſcure manner of its diſcovery, which *Bellarmin* himſelf acknowledges not to have been *without a Miracle*. Let us thank God that it was ſo happily diſcovered and diſappointed, as I hope their preſent deſign will be by the ſame wonderful and merciful providence of God towards a moſt unworthy People. And may the *lameneſs* and *halting* of *Ignatius Loyola*, the Founder of the *Jeſuits*, never depart from that *Order*, but be a *Fate* continually attending all their villanous Plots and Contrivances.

I ſhall only obſerve to you, that after the diſcovery of this Plot the Authors of it were not convinced of the evil, but ſorry for the miſcarriage of it. Sir *Everard Digby*, whoſe very original Papers and Letters are now in my hands, after he was in Priſon, and knew he muſt ſuffer, calls it *the beſt Cauſe*; and was extremely troubled to here it *cenſured by Catholicks and Prieſts, contrary to his expectation, for a great ſin: Let me tell you*, ſays he, *what a grief it is, to hear* THAT *ſo much condemned, which I did believe would have been otherwiſe thought of by Catholicks.* And yet he concludes that *Letter* with theſe words: *In how full joy ſhould I dye, if I could do any thing for the Cauſe which I love more than my life?* And in another *Letter* he ſays, he could have ſaid ſomething to have mitigated the *odium* of this buſineſs, as to that Point of involving thoſe of his own Religion in the common ruine, I *dare not* (ſays he) *take that courſe that I could, to make it appear leſs odious, for divers were to have been brought out of danger, who now would rather hurt them than otherwiſe. I do not think there would have been three worth the ſaving, that ſhould have been loſt.* And as to the reſt, that were to have been ſwallowed up in that deſtruction, he ſeems not to have the leaſt relenting in his mind about them. All doubts he ſeems to have look'd upon as temptations, and *intreats* his Friends *to pray for the pardoning of his not ſufficient ſtriving againſt temptations ſince this buſineſs was undertook.*

Good God! that any thing that is called Religion, ſhould ſo perfectly ſtrip men of all humanity, and transform the mild and gentle race of mankind into ſuch Wolves and Tygers: that ever a pretended zeal for thy glory ſhould inſtigate men to diſhonour Thee at ſuch a rate! It is believed by many, and not without cauſe, that the Pope and his Faction are the *Antichriſt*. I will ſay no more than I know in this matter; I am not ſo ſure that it is *he* that is particularly deſigned in Scripture by that Name, as I am of the main *Articles* of the Chriſtian Faith: But however that be, I challenge *Antichriſt* himſelf, whoever he be, and whenever he comes, to do worſe and wickeder things than theſe.

But I muſt remember my *Text*, and take heed of imitating that *Spirit* which is there condemned, whilſt I am inveighing againſt it. And in truth it almoſt looks uncharitably to ſpeak the truth in theſe matters, and barely to relate what theſe men have not bluſh'd to do. I need not, nay I cannot, aggravate theſe things; they are too horrible in themſelves, even when they are expreſs'd in the ſofteſt and gentleſt words.

I would not be underſtood to charge every particular perſon who is, or hath been in the *Roman* Communion, with the guilt of theſe or the like practices: But I muſt charge their Doctrines and Principles with them: I muſt charge the *Heads* of their Church, and the prevalent *teaching* and *governing* part of it, who are uſually the contrivers and abetters, the executioners and applauders of theſe curſed Deſigns.

I do willingly acknowledge the great Piety and Charity of ſeveral perſons who have lived and died in that Communion, as *Eraſmus*, Father *Paul*, *Thuanus*, and many others; who had in truth more goodneſs than the Principles of that Religion do either incline men to, or allow of. And yet he that conſiders how univerſally almoſt the *Papiſts* in *Ireland* were engaged in that *Maſſacre*, which is ſtill freſh in our memories, will find it very hard to determine how many degrees of innocency and good nature, or of coldneſs and indifferency in Religion, are neceſſary to overballance the fury of a blind zeal and a miſguided Conſcience.

I doubt not but *Papiſts* are made like other men. Nature hath not generally given them ſuch ſavage and cruel diſpoſitions, but their Religion hath made them ſo. Whereas true Chriſtianity is not only the beſt, but the beſt-natur'd Inſtitution in the world; and ſo far as any Church is departed from good nature, and become cruel and barbarous, ſo far is it degenerated from Chriſtianity. I am loth to ſay it, and yet I am confident 'tis very true, That many *Papiſts* would have been excellent Perſons and very good Men, if their Religion had not hindered them; if the Doctrines and Principles of their Church had not perverted and ſpoiled their natural Diſpoſitions.

I ſpeak not this to exaſperate *You*, *worthy Patriots and the great Bulwark of our Religion*, to any *unreaſonable* or *unneceſſary*, much leſs *unchriſtian* Severities againſt them: No, let us not do like them; let us never do any thing for Religion that is contrary to it: But I ſpeak it to awaken your care thus far, That if their *Prieſts* will always be putting theſe pernicious Principles into the minds of the *People*, effectual Proviſion may be made, that it may never be in their Power again to put them in Practice. We have found by Experience, that ever ſince the *Reformation* they have been continually pecking at the Foundations of our Peace and Religion: When God knows we have been ſo far from thirſting after their Blood, that we did not ſo much as deſire their diſquiet but in order to our own neceſſary ſafety, and indeed to theirs.

And God be praiſed for thoſe matchleſs Inſtances which we are able to give of the generous humanity and Chriſtian temper of the *Engliſh Proteſtants*. After Q. *Mary*'s Death, when the Proteſtant Religion was reſtored, Biſhop *Bonner* notwithſtanding all his Cruelties and Butcheries was permitted quietly to live and dye amongſt us. And after the *Treaſon* of this *Day*, nay at this very time ſince the diſcovery of ſo barbarous a Deſign, and the higheſt Provocation in the world, by the treacherous Murder of one of His *Majeſty*'s Juſtices of the Peace, a very good Man and a moſt excellent Magiſtrate, who had been active in the diſcovery of this Plot; I ſay, after all this, and notwithſtanding the continued and inſupportable inſolence of their Carriage and Behaviour, even upon this occaſion, no Violence, nay not ſo much as any incivility, that I ever heard of, hath been offer'd to any of them. I would to God they would but ſeriouſly conſider this one difference between *our* Religion and *theirs*, and which of them comes neareſt to *the Wiſdom which is from above*, which is *peaceable*, and *gentle*, and *full of mercy*. And I do heartily pray, and have good hopes, that upon this occaſion God will open their eyes ſo far, as to convince a great many among them, that *that* cannot be the true Religion which inſpires men with ſuch barbarous minds.

I have now done, and if I have been tranſported upon this Argument ſomewhat beyond my uſual temper, the Occaſion of this *Day*, and our preſent circumſtances will, I hope, bear me out. I have expreſſed my ſelf all along with a juſt ſenſe, and with no unjuſt ſeverity, concerning theſe horrid Principles and Practices; but yet with great pity and tenderneſs towards thoſe miſerably ſeduced Souls, who have been deluded by them, and enſnared in them. And I can truly ſay, as the *Roman* Orator did of himſelf upon another occaſion, *Me natura miſericordem, patria ſeverum, crudelem nec patria nec natura eſſe voluit.* My nature inclines me to be tender and compaſſionate; a hearty zeal for our Religion, and concernment for the publick welfare of my country, may perhaps have made me a little ſevere; but neither my natural diſpoſition, nor the temper of the *Engliſh* Nation, nor the *Genius* of the *Proteſtant, that is,* the true *Chriſtian* Religion, will allow me to be cruel.

For the future, Let us *encourage our ſelves in the Lord our* God; and *commit* our Cauſe, and *the keeping of our Souls to Him in well doing:* And, under God, let us leave it to the wiſdom and care of His *Majeſty*, and his two Houſes of Parliament, to make a laſting Proviſion for the ſecurity of our Peace and Religon againſt all the ſecret contrivances and open attempts of *theſe ſons of violence.* And let us remember thoſe words of *David*, Pſal. 37. 12, 13, 14, 15. *The wicked plotteth againſt the juſt, and gnaſheth upon him with his teeth: The Lord ſhall laugh at him, for he ſeeth that his day is coming. The Wicked have drawn out the ſword, and bent their bow, to caſt down the poor and needy, and to ſlay ſuch as be of upright converſation: Their ſwords ſhall enter into their own heart, and their bows ſhall be broken.*

And I hope, conſidering what God hath heretofore done, and hath now begun to do for us, we may take encouragement to our ſelves againſt all the Enemies of our Religion, which are confederated againſt us, in the words of the Prophet, *Iſa.* 8. 9, 10. *Aſſociate your ſelves, O ye People, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces, and give ear, all ye of far Countries: Gird your ſelves, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces: Gird your ſelves, and ye ſhall be broken in pieces: Take counſel together, and it ſhall come to nought: Speak the word and it ſhall not ſtand. FOR GOD IS WITH US.*

And now what remains, but to make our moſt devout and thankful acknowledgments to *Almighty God*, for the invaluable bleſſing of our *Reformed* Relgion, and for the miraculous *Deliverance* of this *Day*, and for the wonderful *Diſcovery* of the late horrid and barbarous *Conſpiracy* againſt our *Prince*, our *Peace*, and our *Religion*.

To Him *therefore, our moſt gracious and merciful God, our* Shield, *and our* Rock, *and our mighty* Deliverer: *Who hath* brought us out of the land of *Egypt*, and out of the Houſe of bondage; *and hath ſet us free from* Popiſh *Tyranny and Superſtition*, a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.

Who hath, from time to time, delivered us from the bloody and mercileſs deſigns of wicked and unreaſonable men ; *and hath render'd all the plots and contrivances, the miſchievous* counſels and devices *of theſe* worſe than Heathens, *of none effect.*

Who did as upon this Day, *reſcue our* King *and our* Princes, *our* Nobles *and the* Heads of our Tribes, *the* Governours *of our* Church *and the* Judges *of the* Land, *from that fearful Deſtruction which was ready to have ſwallowed them up.*

Who ſtill brings to light the hidden things of darkneſs, *and hath hitherto preſerved our* Religion *and* Civil *intereſts to us, in deſpight of all the malicious and reſtleſs attempts of our Adverſaries.*

Unto that great God, *who hath done ſo great things for us, and hath ſaved us by a mighty* Salvation : *Who* hath delivered us, and doth deliver us, and, we truſt, will ſtill deliver us : *be glory and honour, thankſgiving and praiſe, from generation to generation.* And let all the people ſay, *Amen.*

A

SERMON

Preached at the

First General Meeting

OF THE

Gentlemen and Others

Born within the

COUNTY of YORK.

To my Honoured

FRIENDS and COUNTREYMEN,

Mr. *Hugh Frankland,*
Leonard Robinſon,
Abrah. Fothergil,
William Fairfax,
Thomas Johnſon,
John Hardeſty,

Mr. *Gervas Wilcokes,*
George Pickering,
Edward Duffeild,
John Topham,
James Longbotham,
Nathan. Holroyd.

Stewards of the YORKSHIRE Feaſt.

GENTLEMEN,

THIS Sermon, *which was firſt Preached, and is now Publiſhed at your deſires, I dedicate to your* Names, *to whoſe prudence and care the direction and management of this firſt general* Meeting *of our Countreymen was committed; Heartily wiſhing that it may be ſome way ſerviceable to the healing of our unhappy Differences, and the reſtoring of Unity and Charity among Chriſtians, eſpecially thoſe of the Proteſtant Reform'd Religion. I am*

Gentlemen,

Your affectionate Countrey-man

and humble Servant;

Jo. Tillotſon.

SERMON XX.

Preached at the
Firſt General Meeting
OF THE
GENTLEMEN, and Others, in and near *London*,
Born within the
COUNTY of YORK.

JOHN XIII. 34, 35.

A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another: By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye love one another.

AS the Chriſtian Religion in general, is the beſt Philoſophy and moſt perfect Inſtitution of Life; containing in it the moſt entire and compleat Syſtem of moral Rules and Precepts that was ever yet extant in the World: ſo it peculiarly excells in the Doctrine of *Love* and *Charity*; earneſtly recommending, ſtrictly enjoyning, and vehemently and almoſt perpetually preſſing and inculcating the excellency and neceſſity of this beſt of Graces and Virtues; and propounding to us for our imitation and encouragement, the moſt lively and heroical Example of kindneſs and charity, that ever was, in the Life and Death of the great Founder of our Religion, *the author and finiſher of our Faith*, *Jeſus* the Son of God.

So that the Goſpel, as it hath in all other parts of our Duty cleared the dimneſs and obſcurity of *natural* light and ſupplied the imperfections of former *Revelations*, ſo doth it moſt eminently reign and triumph in this great and bleſſed virtue of *Charity*; in which all the Philoſophy and Religions that had been before in the World, whether *Jewiſh or Pagan*, were ſo remarkably defective.

With great reaſon then doth our bleſſed Saviour call this *a new Commandment*, and aſſert it to himſelf as a thing peculiar to his Doctrine and Religion; conſidering how imperfectly it had been taught and how little it had been practiſed in the World before; *A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another: By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye love one another.*

I ſhall reduce my Diſcourſe upon theſe *Words* under theſe ſix Heads.

Firſt, To enquire in what ſenſe our Saviour calls this Commandment of loving one another *a new Commandment*

Secondly, To declare to you the nature of this Commandment, by inſtancing in the chief Acts and Properties of Love.

Thirdly, To conſider the degrees and meaſures of our Charity with regard to the ſeveral Objects about which it is exerciſed.

Fourthly, Our obligation to this Duty not only from our Saviour's Authority, but likewiſe from our own Nature, and from the Reaſonableneſs and Excellency of the thing commanded.

Fifthly, The great *Example* which is here propounded to our imitation; *as I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another.*

Sixthly, and Laſtly, the Place and Rank which this Precept holds in the Chriſtian Religion. Our Saviour makes it the proper badge of a *Diſciple*, the diſtinctive mark and character of our Profeſſion; *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye love one another.*

I. *In what ſenſe our Saviour calls this Commandment of loving one another a new Commandment*; Not that it is abſolutely and altogether *New*, but upon ſome ſpecial accounts. For it is a branch of the ancient and primitive Law of Nature. *Ariſtotle* truly obſerves that upon grounds of natural kindred and likeneſs *all men are friends*, and kindly diſpoſed towards one another. And it is a known Precept of the *Jewiſh* Religion, to *love our Neighbour as our ſelves.*

In ſome ſenſe then, it is *no new Commandment*; and ſo St. *John*, who was moſt likely to underſtand our Saviour's meaning in this particular, (all his preaching and writing being almoſt nothing elſe but an inculcating of this one Precept) explains this matter, telling us that in ſeveral reſpects it was, and it was not *a new Commandment*, 1 John 2. 7, 8. *Brethren, I write no new Commandment unto you, but that which ye had from the beginning, that is*, from ancient Times: But then he corrects himſelf; *Again*, *πάλιν*, *but yet a new Commandment I write unto you.* So that though it was not abſolutely *new*, yet upon divers conſiderable accounts it was ſo, and in a peculiar manner proper to the *Evangelical* Inſtitution; and is in ſo expreſs and particular a manner aſcribed to the teaching of the *Holy Ghoſt*, which was conferr'd upon Chriſtians by the Faith of the Goſpel, as if there hardly needed any outward inſtruction and exhortation to that purpoſe, 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 9. *But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye your ſelves are θεοδίδακτοι, divinely taught and inſpired to love one another.*

This Commandment then of *loving one another* is by our Lord and Saviour ſo much enlarged as to the *Object* of it, beyond what either the *Jews* or *Heathens* did underſtand it to be, extending to all mankind, and even to our greateſt enemies; ſo greatly advanced and heightned as to the *Degree* of it, even to the laying down of our lives for one another; ſo effectually taught, ſo mightily encouraged, ſo very much urged and inſiſted upon, that it may very well be called a *new Commandment*: for though it was not altogether unknown to Mankind before, yet it was never ſo taught, ſo encouraged; never was ſuch an illuſtrious Example given of it, never ſo much weight and ſtreſs laid upon it by any Philoſophy or Religion that was before in the World.

II. I ſhall endeavour to declare to you the *Nature of this Commandment, or the Duty required by it.* And that will beſt be done, by inſtancing in the chief *Acts* and *Properties* of Love and Charity. As, *humanity* and kindneſs in all our carriage and behaviour towards one another; for Love ſmooths the diſpoſitions of men ſo that they are not apt to grate upon one another: Next, to *rejoyce* in the good and happineſs of one another, and to *grieve* at their evils and ſufferings; for Love unites the intereſts of men ſo as to make them affected with what happens to another as if it were in ſome ſort their own caſe: Then, to contribute as much as in us lies to the happineſs of one another, by relieving one anothers wants and redreſſing their misfortunes: Again, tenderneſs of their good name and reputation; a proneneſs to interpret all the words and actions of men to the beſt ſenſe; patience and forbearance towards one another; and when differences happen, to manage them with all poſſible calmneſs and kindneſs, and to be ready to forgive and to be reconciled to one another; to pray one for another; and if occaſion be, at leaſt if the publick good of Chriſtianity require it, to be ready to lay down our lives for our brethren, and to ſacrifice our ſelves for the furtherance of their Salvation.

III. We will conſider the *Degrees and meaſures of our Charity, with regard to the various Objects about which it is excercised.* III.

And as to the *negative* part of this Duty, it is to be extended equally towards all. We are not to hate or bear ill-will to any man, or to do him any harm or miſchief; *Love worketh no evil to his neighbour.* Thus much charity we are to exerciſe towards all without any exception, without any difference.

And as to the *poſitive* part of this Duty, we ſhould bear an univerſal good-will to all men, wiſhing every mans happineſs, and praying for it as heartily as for our own: And if we be ſincere herein, we ſhall be ready upon all occaſions to procure and promote the welfare of all men. But the outward acts and teſtimonies of our Charity neither can be actually extended to all, nor ought to be to all alike. We do not know the wants of all; and therefore our knowledge of perſons, and of their conditions doth neceſſarily limit the effects of our Charity within a certain compaſs; and of thoſe we do know, we can but relieve a ſmall part for want of ability. Whence it becomes neceſſary, that we ſet ſome rules to our ſelves for the more diſcreet ordering of our Charity; ſuch as theſe; Caſes of extremity ought to take place of all other. Obligations of Nature, and nearneſs of Relation, ſeem to challenge the next place. Obligations of kindneſs, and upon the accounts of benefits received, may well lay the next claim. And then the *Houſhould of Faith* is to be peculiarly conſidered. And after theſe, the merit of the perſons, and all circumſtances belonging to them, are to be weighed and valued: Thoſe who labour in an honeſt calling, but are oppreſs'd with their charge; thoſe who are fallen from a plentiful condition, eſpecially by misfortune and the providence of God, without their own fault; thoſe who have relieved others, and have been eminently charitable and beneficial to mankind; and laſtly, thoſe whoſe viſible neceſſities and infirmities of body or mind, whether by age or by accident, do plead for them: All theſe do challenge our more eſpecial regard and conſideration.

IV. We will conſider *our Obligations to this Duty, not only from our Saviour's Authority, but likewiſe from our own Nature, and from the reaſonableneſs and Excellency of the thing commanded.* This is the Commandment of the *Son of God*, who came down from Heaven with full Authority to declare the Will of God to us. And this is peculiarly *His Commandment*, which he urgeth IV.

geth upon his Diſciples ſo earneſtly, and ſo as if he almoſt required nothing elſe in compariſon of this. *Joh.* 15. 12. *This is my Commandment, that ye love one another:* And *verſe* 17. *Theſe things I command you, that ye love one another.* As if this were the end of all his Precepts, and of his whole Doctrine, to bring us to the practice of this Duty. And ſo St. *John*, the *loving* and *beloved Diſciple*, ſpeaks of it as the great *Meſſage* which the Son of God was to deliver to mankind, 1 *Joh.* 3. 11. *This is the Meſſage which ye have heard from the beginning, that ye ſhould love one another.* And *ver.* 23. *This is his Commandment, that we ſhould believe on the Name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, and love one another, as he gave us Commandment.* And *chap.* 4. v. 21. *This Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth* God, *loveth his Brother alſo.*

But beſides the Authority of our Saviour, we have a precedent obligation to it from our own Nature, and from the Reaſonableneſs and Excellency of the thing it ſelf. The frame of our Nature diposeth us to it, and our inclination to Society, in which there can be no pleaſure, no advantage, without mutual love and kindneſs. And *Equity* alſo calls for it, for that we our ſelves wiſh and expect kindneſs from others is conviction enough to us that we owe it to others. The fulfilling of this Law is the great perfection of our Natures, the advancement and enlargement of our Souls, the chief ornament and beauty of a great mind. It makes us like to God, the beſt and moſt perfect and happieſt Being, in that which is the prime excellency and happineſs and glory of the Divine Nature.

And the advantages of this temper are unſpeakable and innumerable. It freeth our ſouls from thoſe unruly and troubleſom and diſquieting Paſſions which are the great torment of our Spirits; from Anger and Envy, from Malice and Revenge, from Jealouſie and Diſcontent. It makes our minds calm and chearful, and puts our ſouls into an eaſie poſture, and into good humour, and maintains us in the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of our ſelves: It preſerves men from many miſchiefs and inconveniences, to which enmity and ill-will do perpetually expoſe them: It is apt to make Friends, and to gain Enemies; and to render every condition either pleaſant, or eaſie, or tolerable to us. So that to love others, is the trueſt love to our ſelves, and doth rebound to our own unſpeakable benefit and advantage in all reſpects.

It is a very conſiderable part of our Duty, and almoſt equall'd by our Saviour with the *firſt and great Commandment of the Law.* It is highly acceptable to God, moſt beneficial to others, and very comfortable to our ſelves. It is the eaſieſt of all Duties, and it makes all others eaſie; the pleaſure of it makes the pains to ſignifie nothing, and the delightful reflection upon it afterwards is a moſt ample reward of it. It is a Duty in every man's power to perform, how ſtrait and indigent ſoever his fortune and condition be. The pooreſt man may be as charitable as a Prince; he may have as much kindneſs in his heart, though his hand cannot be ſo bountiful and munificent. Our Saviour inſtanceth in the giving of a *cup of cold water*, as a Charity that will be highly accepted and rewarded by God. And one of the moſt celebrated Charities that ever was; how ſmall was it for the matter of it, and yet how great in regard of the mind that gave it? I mean the Widow's *two mites*, which ſhe *caſt into the Treaſury:* One could hardly give leſs, and yet none can give more, for ſhe gave *all that ſhe had.* All theſe excellencies and advantages of Love and Charity, which I have briefly recounted, are ſo many Arguments, ſo many Obligations to the practice of this Duty.

V. We will conſider *the great Inſtance and Example which is here propounded to our imitation*; *As I have loved you, that ye alſo love one another.* The Son of God's becoming man, his whole Life, his bitter Death and Paſſion, all that he did and all that he ſuffered, was one great and continued proof and evidence of his mighty love to mankind. The greateſt Inſtance of love among men, and that too but very rare, is for a Man *to lay down his life for another, for his Friend*; but the Son of God died for all mankind, and we were all his enemies. And ſhould we not chearfully imitate the Example of that great Love and Charity, the effects whereof are ſo comfortable, ſo beneficial, ſo happy to every one of us. Had he not loved us, and died for us, we had certainly periſh'd, we had been miſerable and undone to all eternity. V.

And to perpetuate this great Example of Charity, and that it might be always freſh in our memories, the great Sacrament of our Religion was on purpoſe inſtituted for the Commemoration of this great love of the Son of God, in laying down his life, and ſhedding his precious blood for the wicked and rebellious Race of mankind. But I have not time to enlarge upon this noble Argument as it deſerves.

VI. The *laſt* thing to be conſidered is *the place and rank which this Precept and Duty holds in the Chriſtian Religion.* Our bleſſed *Saviour* here makes it the proper badge and cogniſance of our Profeſſion; *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye love one another.* The different *Sects* among the *Jews* had ſome peculiar Character to diſtinguiſh them from one another: The *Scholars* of the ſeveral great *Rabbi*'s among them had ſome peculiar Sayings and Opinions, ſome Cuſtoms and Traditions whereby they were ſeverally known; And ſo likewiſe the *Diſciples* of *John* the *Baptiſt* were particularly remarkable for their great Auſterities. In alluſion to theſe diſtinctions of *Sects* and *Schools* among the *Jews*, our *Saviour* fixeth upon this mark and character whereby his *Diſciples* ſhould be known from the *Diſciples* of any other Inſtitution, *A mighty love and affection to one another.* VI.

Other *Sects* were diſtinguiſh'd by little Opinions, or by ſome external Rites and Obſervances in Religion; but our *Saviour* pitcheth upon that, which is the moſt real and ſubſtantial, the moſt large and extenſive, the moſt uſeful and beneficial, the moſt *humane* and the moſt *divine* quality of which we are capable.

This was his great Commandment to his Diſciples, before he left the World: This was the Legacy he left them, and the effect of his laſt Prayers for them: And for this end, among others, he inſtituted the Sacrament of his bleſſed Body and Blood, to be a lively remembrance of his great Charity to mankind, and a perpetual bond of Love and Union amongſt his Followers.

And the *Apoſtles* of our Lord and Saviour do upon all occaſions recommend this to us, as a principal Duty and Part of our Religion; telling us, That *in Chriſt Jeſus*, that is, in the Chriſtian Religion, nothing will *avail*, no not *Faith* it ſelf, unleſs it be enlivened and *inſpired by Charity*; That *Love is the end of the Commandment*, τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας, the *end of the Evangelical declaration*, the firſt *Fruit of the Spirit*, the ſpring and root of all thoſe Graces and Virtues which concern our duty towards one another: That it is the *ſum* and abridgement, the accompliſhment and *fulfilling of the whole Law*: That without this, whatever we pretend to in Chriſtianity, *we are nothing*, and our *Religion is vain*: That this is the greateſt of all Graces and Virtues, greater than *Faith* and *Hope*; and of perpetual uſe and duration, *Charity never fails.*

And therefore they exhort us above all things to endeavour after it, as the Crown of all other Virtues: *Above all things have fervent charity among your ſelves*, ſaith St. *Peter*: And St. *Paul*, having enumerated moſt other Chriſtian Virtues, exhorts us above all to ſtrive after this, *And above all theſe things put on Charity, which is the bond of perfection.* This St. *John* makes one of the moſt certain ſigns of our love to God, and the want of it an undeniable argument of the contrary: *If a man ſay I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he who loveth not his brother whom he hath ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not ſeen?* *This* he declares to be one of the beſt evidences that we are in a ſtate of Grace and Salvation, *Hereby we know that we are paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren.*

So that well might our bleſſed Saviour chuſe this for the badge of his Diſciples, and make it the great Precept of the beſt and moſt perfect Inſtitution? Other things might have ſerved better for pomp and oſtentation, and have more gratified the Curioſity, or Enthuſiaſm, or Superſtition of mankind, but there is no quality in the World which upon a ſober and impartial conſideration is of a more ſolid and intrinſick value.

And in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, the Chriſtians were very eminent for this Vertue, and particularly noted for it; *Nobis notam inurit apud quoſdam, it is a mark and brand ſet upon us by ſome*, ſaith *Tertullian*; and he tells us that it was proverbially ſaid among the *Heathen, Behold how theſe Chriſtians love one another. Lucian*, that great ſcoffer at all Religion, acknowledgeth in behalf of Chriſtians, that this was the great Principle which *their Maſter* had inſtill'd into them: And *Julian*, the bittereſt Enemy that Chriſtianity ever had, could not forbear to propound to the *Heathen* for an example the charity of the *Galileans*, for ſo by way of reproach he calls the *Chriſtians, who* (ſays he) *gave up themſelves to humanity* and kindneſs; which he acknowledgeth to have been very much to the advantage and reputation of our Religion: And in the ſame *Letter* to *Arſacius*, the *Heathen* High Prieſt of *Galatia*, he gives this memorable Teſtimony of the *Chriſtians*, that their Charity was not limited and confin'd onely to themſelves, but extended even to their Enemies; which could not be ſaid either of the *Jews* or *Heathens*: His words are theſe, *It is a ſhame, that when the* Jews *ſuffer none of theirs to beg, and the impious* Galileans *relieve not onely their own, but thoſe alſo of our Religion, that we onely ſhould be defective in ſo neceſſary a Duty.* By all which it is evident that Love and Charity is not onely the great Precept of our *Saviour*, but was in thoſe firſt and bleſt Times the general practiſe of his Diſciples, and acknowledged by the *Heathens* as a very peculiar and remarkable quality in them.

The application I ſhall make of this Diſcourſe ſhall be threefold.

1. With relation to the Church of *Rome*.
2. With regard to our ſelves who profeſs the *Proteſtant* Reform'd Religion.
3. With a more particular reſpect to the occaſion of this Meeting.

I. *Firſt, With Relation to the Church of Rome*; Which we cannot chuſe but think of, whenever we ſpeak of Charity and loving one another; eſpecially having had ſo late a diſcovery of their affection to us, and ſo conſiderable a teſtimony of the kindneſs and charity which they deſigned towards us: ſuch as may juſtly *make the ears of all that hear it to tingle*, and render *Popery* execrable and infamous, a *frightful* and a *hateful* thing to the end of the World.

It is now but too viſible how groſly this great Commandment of our Saviour is contradicted, not only by the Practices of thoſe in that Communion on from the *Pope* down to the meaneſt *Fryar*; but by the very Doctrines and Principles, by the *Genius* and Spirit of that Religion, which is wholly calculated for cruelty and perſecution. Where now is that *mark* of a *Diſciple*, ſo much inſiſted upon by our *Lord* and *Maſter*, to be found in that Church? And yet what is the *Chriſtian* Church but the Society and Community of *Chriſt's Diſciples*? Surely in all reaſon, that which our *Lord* made the diſtinctive Mark and Character of his *Diſciples*, ſhould be the principal mark of a *true Church*. *Bellarmine* reckons up no leſs than *fifteen* marks of the true Church, all which the Church of *Rome* arrogates to her ſelf alone: But he wiſely forgot that which is worth all the reſt, and which our Saviour inſiſts upon as the chief of all other, *A ſincere Love and Charity to all Chriſtians*: This he knew would by no means agree to his own Church.

But for all that, it is very reaſonable that Churches as well as particular Chriſtians ſhould be judged by their Charity. The Church of *Rome* would engroſs all Faith to her ſelf: Faith in its utmoſt perfection, to the degree and pitch of infallibility; and they allow no body in the world, beſides themſelves, no though they believe all the Articles of the Apoſtles Creed, to have one grain of true Faith? becauſe they do not believe upon the Authority of their Church, which they pretend to be the only foundation of true Faith. This is a moſt arrogant and vain pretence; but admit it were true, yet in the Judgment of St *Paul*, *Though they had all Faith, if they have not Charity, they are nothing.*

The greateſt wonder of all is this, that they who hate and perſecute Chriſtians moſt, do all this while the moſt confidently of all others pretend to be the Diſciples of Chriſt, and will allow none to be ſo but themſelves. *That* Church which excomunicates all other Chriſtian Churches in the world, and if ſhe could, would extirpate them out of the world, will yet needs aſſume to her ſelf to be the only Chriſtian Church; As if our Saviour had ſaid, *Hereby ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye hate, and excommunicate, and kill one another: What ſhall be done unto thee, thou falſe tongue?* thou empty and impudent pretence of Chriſtianity!

II. Secondly, *With relation to our ſelves, who profeſs the Proteſtant Reformed Religion.* How is this great Precept of our Saviour not only ſhamefully neglected, but plainly violated by us? And that not only by private hatred and ill-will, quarrels and contentions in our civil converſation and intercourſe with one another; but by moſt unchriſtian diviſions and animoſities in that common relation wherein we ſtand to one another, as *Brethren*, as *Chriſtians*, as *Proteſtants*.

Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us? And are we not in a more peculiar and eminent manner *brethren*, being *all the Children of God by Faith in Jeſus Chriſt*? Are we not all members of the ſame Body, and partakers of the ſame Spirit, and Heirs of the ſame bleſſed Hopes of eternal life.

So that being Brethren upon ſo many accounts, and by ſo many bonds and endearments all united to one another, and all travelling towards the ſame heavenly Country, *why do we fall out by the way, ſince we be Brethren?* Why do we not as becomes *Brethren*, dwell together in unity? but are ſo apt to quarrel and break out into heats, to crumble into Sects and Parties, to divide and ſeparate from one another upon every ſlight and trifling occaſion.

Give me leave a little more fully to expoſtulate this matter, but very calmly and *in the ſpirit of meekneſs*, and in the name of our dear *Lord* who loved us all at ſuch a rate as to die for us, to recommend to you this *new Commandment* of his, *that ye love one another*: Which is almoſt a *new Commandment* ſtill, and hardly the worſe for wearing; ſo ſeldom it is put on, and ſo little hath it been practiſed among Chriſtians for ſeveral Ages.

Conſider ſeriouſly with your ſelves; ought not the great matters wherein we are agreed, our union in the Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion and in all the neceſſary Articles of that *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*, in the ſame Sacraments, and in all the ſubſtantial parts of God's worſhip, and in the great Duties and Vertues of the Chriſtian life, to be of greater force to unite us, than difference in doubtful Opinions, and in little Rites and Circumſtances of worſhip to divide and break us?

Are not the things about which we differ in their nature *indifferent*, that is, things about which there ought to be no difference among wiſe men? Are they not at a great diſtance from the life and eſſence of Religion, and rather good or bad as they tend to the Peace and Unity of the Church, or are made uſe of to Schiſm and Faction, than either neceſſary or evil in themſelves? And ſhall little ſcruples weigh ſo far with us, as by breaking the Peace of the Church about them to endanger our whole Religion? Shall we take one another by *the throat for a hundred pence*, when our common Adverſary ſtands ready to clap upon us an Action of *ten thouſand Talents*? Can we in good earneſt be contented that rather than the *Surplice* ſhould not be thrown out, *Popery* ſhould come in; and rather than receive the Sacrament in the humble but indifferent poſture of *kneeling*, to ſwallow the Camel of *Tranſubſtantiation*, and *adore* the Elements of Bread and Wine for our God and Saviour? and rather than to ſubmit to a *Set Form* of Prayer, to have the Service of God performed in an *unknown tongue*?

Are we not yet made ſenſible, *at leaſt in this our Day*, by ſo clear a Demonſtration as the Providence of God hath lately given us: and had not He been infinitely merciful to us, might have proved the deareſt and moſt dangerous Experiment that ever was: I ſay, are we not yet convinced, what mighty advantages our Enemies have made of our Diviſions, and what a plentiful harveſt they have had among us, during our differences, and upon occaſion of them; and how near their Religion was to have entred in upon us at once, at thoſe wide breaches which we had made for it? And will we ſtill take counſel of our Enemies, and chuſe to follow that courſe to which, of all other, they who hate us and ſeek our ruin would moſt certainly adviſe and direct us? Will we freely offer them that advantage which they would be contented to purchaſe at any rate?

Let us after all our ſad experience, at laſt take Warning to keep a ſtedfaſt eye upon our chief Enemy, and not ſuffer our ſelves to be diverted from the conſideration and regard of our greateſt danger by the petty provocations of our Friends; ſo I chuſe to call thoſe who diſſent from us in leſſer matters becauſe I would fain have them ſo, and they ought in all reaſon to be ſo: But however they behave themſelves, we ought not much to mind thoſe who only fling dirt at us, whilſt we are ſure there are others who fly at our throats, and ſtrike at our very hearts.

Let us learn this wiſdom of our Enemies, who though they have many great differences among themſelves, yet they have made a ſhift at this time to unite together to deſtroy us: And ſhall not we do as much to ſave our ſelves?

——— *fas eſt & ab hoſte doceri.*

It was a Principle among the ancient *Romans*, a brave and wiſe People, *donare inimicitias Reip.* to give up and ſacrifice their private enmities and quarrels to the publick good and the ſafety of the Common-wealth. And is it not to every conſiderate man as clear as the Sun at Noon-day, that nothing can maintain and ſupport the Proteſtant Religion amongſt us, and *found* our Church *upon a Rock*, ſo that *when the rain falls, and the winds blow, and the floods beat upon it*, it ſhall *ſtand* firm and unſhaken: That nothing can be a Bulwark of ſufficient force to reſiſt all the arts and attempts of Popery, but *an eſtabliſht National Religion*, firmly united and compacted in all the parts of it? Is it not plain to every eye, that little *Sects* and *ſeparate Congregations* can never do it? but will be like a Foundation of *ſand* to a weighty Building, which whatever ſhew it may make cannot ſtand long, becauſe it wants Union at the Foundation, and for that reaſon muſt neceſſarily want ſtrength and firmneſs.

It is not for private perſons to undertake in matters of publick concernment; but I think we have no cauſe to doubt but the Governors of our Church (notwithſtanding all the advantages of Authority, and we think of reaſon too on our ſide) are Perſons of that Piety and Prudence, that for Peace ſake, and in order to a firm Union among Proteſtants, they would be content, if that would do it, not to inſiſt upon little things; but to yeild them up, whether to the infirmity, or importunity, or, perhaps in ſome very few things, to the plauſible exceptions of thoſe who differ from us.

But then ſurely on the other ſide, men ought to bring along with them a peaceable diſpoſition, and a mind ready to comply with the Church in which they were born and baptized, in all reaſonable and lawful things, and deſirous upon any terms that are tolerable to return to the Communion of it: a mind free from paſſion and prejudice, from peeviſh exceptions, and groundleſs and endleſs ſcruples; not apt to inſiſt upon little cavils and objections, to which the very beſt things, and the greateſt and the cleareſt Truths in the World are and always will be liable: And whatever they have been heretofore, to be *henceforth no more children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the ſleight of men and cunning craftineſs of thoſe who lie in wait to deceive.*

And if we were thus affected on all hands, we might yet be a happy Church and Nation; if we would govern our ſelves by theſe Rules and walk according to them, *peace would be upon us, and mercy, and on the* Iſrael *of God.*

III. *Thirdly*, I ſhall conclude all with a few words *in relation to the occaſion of this preſent meeting.* I have all this while been recommending to you, from the Authority and Example of our Bleſſed Saviour, and from the Nature and and reaſon of the thing it ſelf, this moſt excellent Grace and Virtue of Charity, in the moſt proper Acts and Inſtances of it: But beſides particular Acts of Charity to be exerciſed upon emergent occaſions, there were likewiſe charitable Cuſtoms which are highly commendable, becauſe they are more certain and conſtant, of a larger extent, and of a longer continuance; As the *Meeting* of the *Sons* of the *Clergy*, which is now form'd and eſtabliſh'd into a *charitable Corporation*: And the Anniverſary *Meetings* of thoſe of the ſeveral *Counties* of *England*, who reſide, or happen to be in *London*; for *two* of the beſt and nobleſt ends that can be, the maintaining of *Friendſhip*, and the promoting of *Charity*. Theſe, and others of the like kind, I call *charitable cuſtoms*, which of late years have very much obtained in this great and famous City. And it cannot but be a great pleaſure and ſatisfaction to all good men, to ſee ſo generous, ſo humane, ſo Chriſtian a diſpoſition to prevail and reign ſo much amongſt us.

The ſtrange overflowing of vice and wickedneſs in our Land, and the prodigious increaſe and impudence of infidelity and impiety, hath of late years boaded very ill to us, and brought terrible Judgments upon this City and Nation, and ſeems ſtill to threaten us with more and greater: And the greateſt comfort I have had under theſe ſad apprehenſions of God's diſpleaſure hath been this, that though *bad* men were perhaps never worſe in any Age, yet the *good*, who I hope are not a few, were never more truly and ſubſtantially good: I do verily believe there never were, in any Time, greater and more real effects of Charity; not from a blind ſuperſtition, and an ignorant zeal, and a mercenary and arrogant and preſumptuous principle of Merit, but from a ſound knowledge, and a ſincere love and obedience to God, or, as the *Apoſtle* expreſſeth it, *out of a pure heart, and of a good conſcience, and of faith unfeigned.*

And who, that loves God and Religion, can chuſe but take great contentment to ſee ſo general and forward an inclination in People this way? Which hath been very much cheriſhed of late years by this ſort of Meetings: and that to very good purpoſe and effect, in many charitable contributions diſpoſed in the beſt and wiſeſt ways: and which likewiſe hath tended very much to the reconciling of the minds of men, and the allaying of thoſe fierce heats and animoſities which have been cauſed by our Civil confuſions, and Religious diſtractions. For there is nothing many times wanting to take away prejudice, and to extinguiſh hatred and ill-will, but an opportunity for men to ſee and underſtand one another; by which they will quickly perceive, that they are not ſuch Monſters as they have been repreſented one to another at a diſtance.

We are, I think, one of the laſt Counties of *England* that have entred into this friendly and charitable kind of Society; Let us make amends for our late ſetting out by quickning our pace, that ſo we may overtake and outſtrip thoſe who are gone before us: Let not our Charity partake of the coldneſs of our Climate, but let us endeavour that it may be equal to the extent of our Country; and as we are incomparably the greateſt *County* of *England*, let it appear that we are ſo by the largeneſs and extent of our Charity.

O Lord, who haſt taught us that all our doings without Charity are nothing, ſend thy Holy Ghoſt, and pour into our hearts that moſt excellent gift of Charity, the very bond of Peace, and of all Vertues: Without which whoſoever liveth, is counted dead before thee. Grant this for thy only Son Jeſus Chriſt's ſake.

Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

Preached at

WHITE-HALL,

April 4*th*. 1679.

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1 JOHN iv. 1.

Beloved, believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits whether they are of God; becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the World.

THis caution and counſel was given upon occaſion of the falſe Prophets and Teachers that were riſen up in the beginning of the *Chriſtian* Church, who endeavoured to ſeduce men from the true Doctrine of the Goſpel delivered by the Apoſtles of our Lord and Saviour. And theſe teaching contrary things, could not both be from God; and therefore St. *John* calls upon Chriſtians to examine the Doctrines and Pretences of thoſe new Teachers, whether they were from God or not. *Believe not every Spirit*; *that is*, not every one that takes upon him to be inſpired and to be a Teacher come from God: *But try the Spirits*; *that is*, examine thoſe that make this pretence, whether it be real or not; and examine the Doctrines which they bring, becauſe there are many Impoſtors abroad in the World.

This is the plain ſence of the Words: In which there are contained theſe *four* Propoſitions.

Firſt, *That men may, and often do, falſly pretend to Inſpiration.* And this is the reaſon upon which the Apoſtle grounds this Exhortation: *Becauſe many falſe Prophets are gone out into the world*, therefore we ſhould try who are true, and who are falſe.

Secondly, *We are not to believe every one that pretends to be inſpired, and to teach a Divine Doctrine:* This follows upon the former; becauſe men may falſly pretend to Inſpiration, therefore we are not to believe every one that makes this pretence. For any man that hath but confidence enough, and conſcience little enough, may pretend to come from God.

And if we admit all pretences of this kind, we lie at the mercy of every crafty and confident man to be led by him into what deluſions he pleaſeth.

Thirdly, *Neither are we to reject all that pretend to come from God.* This is ſufficiently implied in the *Text*; for when the *Apoſtle* ſays *believe not every Spirit*, he ſuppoſeth we are to believe ſome; and when he ſaith *try the Spirits whether they be of God*, he ſuppoſeth ſome to be of God, and that thoſe which are ſo are to be believed. These three Obſervations are ſo plain that I need only to name them, to make way for the

Fourth, Which I principally deſigned to inſiſt upon from theſe Words. And that is this, *That there is ſome way to diſcern mere pretenders to Inſpiration, from thoſe who are truly and Divinely inſpired:* And this is neceſſarily implied in the *Apoſtles* bidding us to *try the Spirits whether they are of God.* For it were in vain to make any trial, if there be no way to diſcern between pretended and real Inſpirations.

Now the handling of this will give occaſion to *two* very material Enquiries and uſeful to be reſolved.

I. *How we may diſcern between true and counterfeit Doctrines*: thoſe which really are from God, and thoſe which only pretend to be ſo?

II. *To whom this judgment of diſcerning doth appertain?*

I. *How we may diſcern between true and counterfeit Doctrines and Revelations?* for the clearing of this I ſhall lay down theſe following Propoſitions.

1. *That Reaſon is the faculty whereby Revelations are to be diſcerned*; or to uſe the phraſe in the *text*, it is that whereby we are to judge *what Spirits are of God, and what not.* For all Revelation from God ſuppoſeth us to be men, and to be endued with Reaſon; and therefore it does not create new Faculties in us, but propounds new Objects to that Faculty which was in us before. Whatever Doctrines God reveals to men are propounded to their Underſtandings, and by this Faculty we are to examine all Doctrines which pretend to be from God, and upon examination to judge whether there be reaſon to receive them as Divine, or to reject them as Impoſtures.

2. *All ſupernatural Revelation ſuppoſeth the truth of the Principles of Natural Religion.* We muſt firſt be aſſured that there is a God, before we can know that he hath made any Revelation of himſelf: and we muſt know that his Words are true, otherwiſe there were no ſufficient reaſon to believe the Revelations which he makes to us: and we muſt believe his Authority over us, and that he will reward our obedience to his Laws, and puniſh our breach of them; otherwiſe there would neither be ſufficient obligation nor encouragement to Obedience. Theſe and many other things are ſuppoſed to be true, and naturally known to us, antecedently to all ſupernatural Revelation; otherwiſe the Revelations of God would ſignifie nothing to us, nor be of any force with us.

3. *All Reaſonings about Divine Revelations muſt neceſſarily be governed by the Principles of Natural Religion: that is,* by thoſe apprehenſions which men naturally have of the Divine perfections, and by the clear Notions of good and evil which are imprinted upon our Natures. Becauſe we have no other way to judg what is worthy of God, and credible to be revealed by him, and what not, but by the natural notions which we have of God and of his eſſential perfections: which, becauſe we know him to be immutable, we have reaſon to believe he will never contradict. And by theſe

Principles likewiſe, we are to interpret what God hath revealed; and when any doubt ariſeth concerning the meaning of any divine Revelation (as that of the Holy Scriptures), we are to govern our ſelves in the interpretation of it by what is moſt agreeable to thoſe natural Notions which we have of God, and we have all the reaſon in the World to reject that ſenſe which is contrary thereto. For inſtance, when God is repreſented in Scripture as having a humane ſhape, eyes, ears and hands, the Notions which men naturally have of the Divine Nature and Perfections do ſufficiently direct us to interpret theſe expreſſions in a ſenſe worthy of God, and agreeable to his Perfection: And therefore it is reaſonable to underſtand them as rather ſpoken to our capacity, and in a Figure, than to be literally intended. And this will proportionably hold in many other caſes.

4. *Nothing ought to be received as a Revelation from God which plainly contradicts the Principles of Natural Religion, or overthrows the certainty of them.* For inſtance, it were in vain to pretend a Revelation from God, *That there is no God*, becauſe this is a contradiction in terms.

So likewiſe to pretend a command from God, *That we are to hate and deſpiſe him*; becauſe it is not credible that God ſhould require any thing of Reaſonable Creatures ſo unſuitable to their Natures, and to their Obligations to him; Beſides that ſuch a Law as this does tacitly involve a contradiction; becauſe upon ſuch a ſuppoſition, to deſpiſe God would be to obey him; and yet to obey him is certainly to honour him. So that in this caſe to honour God, and to deſpiſe him, would be the ſame thing, and equal contempts of him. In like manner it would be vain to pretend any Revelation from God, *That there is no life after this, nor rewards and puniſhments in another World*: becauſe this is contrary to thoſe natural apprehenſions which have generally poſſeſt mankind, and would take away the main force and ſanction of the divine Laws. The like may be ſaid concerning any pretended Revelation from God, which evidently contradicts thoſe natural Notions which men have of good and evil; as, *That God ſhould command, or allow Sedition and Rebellion, Perfidiouſneſs and Perjury*; becauſe the practice of theſe would be apparently deſtructive of the peace and happineſs of Mankind, and would naturally bring confuſion into the World: But *God is not the God of Confuſion, but of Order*, which St. *Paul* appeals to as a Principle naturally known. Upon the ſame account nothing ought to be entertained as a Divine Revelation *which overthrows the certainty of the Principles of natural Religion*; becauſe that would take away the certainty of Divine Revelation it ſelf, which ſuppoſeth the Truth of thoſe Principles. For inſtance, whoever pretends any Revelation *that brings the Providence of God into queſtion*, does by that very thing make ſuch a Revelation queſtionable. For if God take no care of the World, have no concernment for humane affairs, why ſhould we believe that he makes any Revelation of his Will to men? And by this Principle *Moſes* will have falſe Prophets to be tried: *Deut.* 13. 1. *If there ariſe among you a Prophet, and giveth thee a ſign or wonder, and the ſign or the wonder come to paſs whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, Let us go after other Gods, and let us ſerve them; thou ſhalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet*: And he gives the reaſon of this, *ver.* 5. *Becauſe he hath ſpoken unto you to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the Land of Egypt.* Here is a caſe wherein a falſe Prophet is ſuppoſed to work a true Miracle to give credit to his Doctrine (which in other caſes the Scripture makes the ſign of a true Prophet) but yet in this caſe he is to be rejected as an Impoſtor: Becauſe the Doctrine he teacheth would draw men off from the worſhip of the true God who is naturally known, and had manifeſted himſelf to the People of *Iſrael* in ſo miraculous a manner, by bringing them out of the Land of *Egypt*. So that a Miracle is not enough to give credit to a Prophet who teacheth any thing contrary to that natural Notion which men have, *That there is but one God, who only ought to be worſhipped.*

5. *Nothing ought to be received as a Divine Doctrine and Revelation, without good evidence that it is ſo: that is,* without ſome Argument ſufficient to ſatisfie a prudent and conſiderate man. Now (ſuppoſing there be nothing in the matter of the Revelation that is evidently contrary to the Principles of Natural Religion, nor to any former Revelation which hath already received a greater and more ſolemn atteſtation from God) Miracles are owned by all Mankind to be a ſufficient Teſtimony to any Perſon, or Doctrine, that are from God. This was the Teſtimony which God gave to *Moſes* to ſatisfie the people of *Iſrael* that he had ſent him; *Exod.* 4. 1, 2. *Moſes ſaid, They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will ſay, The Lord hath not apperred unto thee.* Upon this God endues him with a power of Miracles, to be an evidence to them, *That they may believe that the God of their Fathers, Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, hath appeared unto thee.* And all along in the *Old Teſtament*, when God ſent his Prophets to make a new Revelation, or upon any ſtrange and extraordinary meſſage, he always gave credit to them by ſome Sign or Wonder which they foretold or wrought. And when he ſent his *Son* into the World, he gave Teſtimony to him by innumerable great and unqueſtionable Miracles, more and greater than *Moſes* and all the Prophets had wrought. And there was great reaſon for this: becauſe our Saviour came not only to publiſh a new Religion to the World, but to put an end to that Religion which God had inſtituted before. And now that the Goſpel hath had the confirmation of ſuch Miracles as never were wrought upon any other occaſion, no Evidence inferiour to this can in reaſon controul this Revelation, or give credit to any thing contrary to it. And therefore though the falſe Prophets and Antichriſts, foretold by our Saviour, did really work Miracles, yet they were ſo inconſiderable in compariſon of our Saviour's, that they deſerve no credit in oppoſition to that Revelation which had ſo clear a Teſtimony given to it from Heaven by Miracles, beſides all other concurring Arguments to confirm it.

6. And *laſtly, No Argument is ſufficient to prove a Doctrine or Revelation to be from God, which is not clearer and ſtronger than the Difficulties and Objections againſt it:* Becauſe all aſſent is grounded upon Evidence, and the ſtrongeſt cleareſt evidence always carries it: But where the evidence is equal on both ſides, that can produce nothing but a ſuſpence and doubt in the mind whether the thing be true or not. If *Moſes* had not confuted *Pharoah*'s Magicians by working Miracles which they could not work, they might reaſonably have diſputed it with him who had been the true Prophet: But when he did works plainly above the power of their Magick and the Devil to do, then they ſubmitted and acknowledged that *there was the Finger of God.* So likewiſe, though a perſon work a Miracle (which ordinarily is a good evidence that he is ſent by God) yet if the Doctrine he brings be plainly contrary to thoſe natural Notions which we have of God, this is a better objection againſt the truth of this Doctrine than the other is a proof of it; as is plain in the caſe which *Moſes* puts, *Deut.* 13. which I mentioned before.

Upon the ſame account no man can reaſonably believe the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* to be revealed by God; becauſe every man hath as great evidence that Tranſubſtantiation is falſe, as any man can pretend to have that God hath revealed any ſuch thing. Suppoſe Tranſubſtantiation to be part of the Chriſtian Doctrine, it muſt have the ſame confirmation with the whole, and that is *Miracles:* But of all Doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a Miracle. For if a Miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very ſame aſſurance which a man hath of the truth of the Miracle, he hath of the falſhood of the Doctrine, *that is,* the clear evidence of his ſenſes for both. For that there is a Miracle wrought to prove, *that what he ſees in the Sacrament is not bread but the body of Chriſt,* he hath onely the evidence of his ſenſes; and he hath the very ſame evidence to prove, *that what he ſees in the Sacrament is not the body of Chriſt, but bread.* So that here ariſeth a new controverſie, whether a man ſhould believe his ſenſes giving teſtimony againſt the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation, or bearing teſtimony to the Miracle which is wrought to confirm that Doctrine: For there is juſt the ſame evidence againſt the truth of the Doctrine, which there is for the truth of the Miracle. So that the Argument for Tranſubſtantiation, and the Objection againſt it, do juſt balance one another; and where the weights in Both Scales are equal, it is impoſſible that the one ſhould weigh down the other: and conſequently Tranſubſtantiation is not to be proved by a Miracle; for that would be, *to prove to a man by ſomething that he ſees, that he does not ſee what he ſees.*

And thus I have endeavoured, as briefly and clearly as I could, to give ſatisfaction to the *firſt* Enquiry I propounded, *viz.* How we may diſcern between true and counterfeit Revelations and Doctrines: I proceed now to the

II. *To whom this judgment of Diſcerning does appertain.* Whether to Chriſtians in general, or to ſome particular Perſon or Perſons, authoriſed by God to judge for the reſt of mankind, by whoſe judgment all men are concluded and bound up. And this is an enquiry of no ſmall Importance; becauſe it is one of the moſt fundamental Points in difference between Us and the Church of *Rome.* And however in many particular Controverſies, as concerning *Tranſubſtantiation, the Communion in one kind, the ſervice of God in an unknown Tongue*; the buſineſs of *Indulgences,* the *Invocation of Saints,* the *Worſhip of Images,* they are not able to offer any thing that is fit to move a reaſonable and conſiderate man; yet in this Controverſie, concerning the Judge of Controverſies, they are not deſtitute of ſome ſpecious appearance of Reaſon which deſerves to be weighed and conſidered. Therefore that we may examine this matter to the bottom, I ſhall do theſe *three* things. II.

1. Lay down ſome Cautions and Limitations whereby we may underſtand how far the generality of Chriſtians are allowed to judge in matters of Religion.

2. I ſhall repreſent the grounds of this Principle.

3. Endeavour to ſatisfie the main Objection of our Adverſaries againſt it: And likewiſe to ſhew, that there is no ſuch reaſon and neceſſity for an univerſal infallible Judge as they pretend.

I. I ſhall lay down ſome Cautions and Limitations, by which we may underſtand how far the generality of Chriſtians are allowed to judge in matters of Religion. I.

Firſt, Private Perſons are onely to judge for themſelves, and not to impoſe their Judgment upon others, as if they had any Authority over them.

And this is reaſonable, becauſe if it were otherwiſe, a Man would deprive others of that Liberty which he aſſumes to himſelf, and which he can claim upon no other account, but becauſe it belongs to others equally with himſelf.

Secondly, This liberty of judging is not ſo to be underſtood as to take away the neceſſity and uſe of Guides and Teachers in Religion. Nor can this be denied to be a reaſonable limitation; becauſe the knowledge of Revealed Religion is not a thing born with us, nor ordinarily ſupernaturally infuſed into men; but is to be learned as other things are. And if it be to be learned, there muſt be ſome to teach and inſtruct others: And they that will learn muſt be modeſt and humble; and in thoſe things, of which they are no competent Judges, they muſt give credit to their Teachers, and truſt their skill: For inſtance, every unlearned man is to take it upon the credit of thoſe who are skilful, that the Scriptures are truly and faithfully tranſlated; and for the underſtanding of obſcure Texts of Scripture, and more difficult Points in Religion, he is to rely upon thoſe, whoſe proper buſineſs and employment it is to apply themſelves to the underſtanding of theſe things. For in theſe caſes every man is not capable of judging himſelf, and therefore he muſt neceſſarily truſt others: And in all other things he ought to be modeſt; and unleſs it be in plain matters, which every man can judge of, he ought rather to diſtruſt himſelf than his Teacher.

And this reſpect may be given to a Teacher without either ſuppoſing him to be infallible, or making an abſolute reſignation of my judgment to him. A man may be a very able Teacher (ſuppoſe of the Mathematicks) and fit to have the reſpect which is due to a Teacher, tho he be not infallible in thoſe Sciences: and becauſe Infallibility is not neceſſary to ſuch a Teacher, it is neither neceſſary nor convenient that I ſhould abſolutely reſign up my Judgment to him. For though I have reaſon to credit him, within the compaſs of his Art, in things which I do not know, I am not therefore bound to believe him in things plainly contrary to what I and all mankind do certainly know. For Example, if upon pretence of his skill in Arithmetick, which I am learning of him, he ſhould tell me, *That twice two do not make four, but five*; though I believed him to be the beſt Mathematician in the World, yet I cannot believe him in this thing: Nor is there reaſon I ſhould; becauſe I did not come to learn this of him, but knew as much of that before as he or any man elſe could tell me. The caſe is the ſame in matters of Religion; in which there are ſome things ſo plain, and lie ſo level to all capacities, that every man is almoſt equally judge of them: As I ſhall have occaſion farther to ſhew by and by.

Thirdly, Neither does this liberty of judging exempt men from a due ſubmiſſion and obedience to their Teachers and Governours. Every man is bound to obey the lawful Commands of his Governors; and what by publick conſent and Authority is determined and eſtabliſhed, ought not to be gainſaid by private Perſons, but upon very clear evidence of the falſhood or unlawfulneſs of it. And this is every man's duty, for the maintaining of Order, and out of regard to the Peace and Unity of the Church; which is not to be violated upon every ſcruple and frivolous pretence: And when men are perverſe and diſobedient, Authority is Judge, and may reſtrain and puniſh them.

Fourthly, Nor do I ſo far extend this Liberty of judging in Religion, as to think every man fit to diſpute the Controverſies of Religion. A great part of people are ignorant, and of ſo mean capacity as not to be able to judge of the force of a very good Argument, much leſs of the iſſue of a long Diſpute;

and ſuch Perſons ought not to engage in diſputes of Religion; but to beg God's direction, and to rely upon their Teachers; and above all to live up to the plain dictates of natural Light, and the clear Commands of God's Word, and this will be their beſt ſecurity. And if the Providence of God hath placed them under ſuch Guides as do ſeduce them into Error, their Ignorance is invincible, and God will not condemn them for it, ſo long as they ſincerely endeavour to do the will of God ſo far as they know it. And this being the caſe of many, eſpecially in the Church of *Rome*, where Ignorance is ſo induſtriouſly cheriſhed, I have ſo much charity as to hope well concerning many of them: And ſeeing *that* Church teacheth and enjoins the people to worſhip Images, it is in ſome ſenſe charitably done of them not to let them know the Second Commandment, that they may not be guilty of ſinning againſt ſo plain a Law. Having premiſed theſe Cautions, I proceed in the

II. Place, To repreſent to you *the grounds of this Principle of our Religion*, viz. *That we allow private perſons to judge for themſelves in matters of Religion.*

Firſt, Becauſe many things in Religion, eſpecially thoſe which are moſt neceſſary to be believed and practiſed, are ſo plain, that every man of ordinary capacity, after competent inſtruction in matters of Religion (which is always to be ſuppoſed) can as well judge of them for himſelf, as any man, or company of men in the world can judge for him. Becauſe in theſe he hath a plain Rule to go by, *Natural Light* and clear *Revelation of Scripture*. And this is no new Principle of the *Proteſtants*, but moſt expreſly owned by the Ancient *Fathers: Whatever things are neceſſary, are plain*, ſaith St. *Chryſoſtom*. *All things are plainly contained in Scripture which concern faith and a good life*, ſaith Saint *Auſtin*. And nothing can be more reaſonable, than that thoſe things which are plain to every man ſhould be left to every man's judgment. For every man can judg of what is plain; of evident Truth and Falſhood, Virtue and Vice, of Doctrines and Laws plainly delivered in Scripture, if we believe any thing to be ſo, which is next to madneſs to deny. I will refer it to no mans Judgment upon earth to determine for me, *Whether there be a God or not*? *Whether Murder and Perjury be Sins?* Whether it be not plain in Scripture, That *Jeſus Chriſt is the Son of God*, That *he became man*, and *died for us*, and *roſe again?* So that there is no need of a Judg in theſe caſes. Nor can I poſſibly believe any man to be ſo abſolutely infallible, as not to call his infallibility into queſtion, if he determines any thing contrary to what is plain and evident to all mankind. For if he ſhould determine *that there is no God*, or *that he is not to be worſhipped*, or *that he will not puniſh and reward men*, or, which is the caſe that *Bellarmine* puts, *that Vertue is Vice, and Vice Vertue*; he would hereby take away the very foundation of Religion; and how can I look upon him any longer as a Judge in Matters of Religion, when there can be no ſuch thing as Religion if he have judged and determined right?

Secondly, The Scripture plainly allows this liberty to *particular* and *private* Perſons to judge for themſelves. And for this I need go no farther than my *Text*, which bids men *try the Spirits whether they be of God*. I do not think this is ſpoken only to the Pope or a general Council, but to Chriſtians in general: for to theſe the *Apoſtle* writes. Now if St. *John* had believed that God had conſtituted an infallible Judge in his Church, to whoſe Sentence and Determination all Chriſtians are bound to ſubmit, he ought in all reaſon to have referred Chriſtians to him for the trial of Spirits, and not have left it to every man's private judgment to examine and to determine theſe things.

But it ſeems St. *Paul* was likewiſe of the ſame mind; and though he was guided by an infallible Spirit, yet he did not expect that men ſhould blindly ſubmit to his Doctrine: Nay, ſo far is he from that, that he commends the *Bereans* for that very thing for which I dare ſay the Church of *Rome* would have check'd them moſt ſeverely, namely, for *ſearching the Scriptures* to ſee *whether thoſe things* which the Apoſtles delivered *were ſo* or not: This liberty St. *Paul* allowed; and though he was inſpired by God, yet he treated thoſe whom he taught like men. And indeed, it were a hard caſe that a neceſſity of believing Divine Revelations, and rejecting Impoſtures, ſhould be impoſed upon Chriſtians; and yet the liberty of judging, whether a Doctrine be from God or not, ſhould be taken away from them.

Thirdly, Our Adverſaries themſelves are forced to grant that which in effect is as much as we contend for. For though they deny a liberty of judging in *particular Points* of *Religion*, yet they are forced to grant men a liberty of Judging upon the *whole*. When they of the Church of *Rome* would perſwade a *Jew*, or a *Heathen*, to become a Chriſtian; or a *Heretick* (as they are pleaſed to call *us*) to come over to the Communion of their Church, and offer Arguments to induce them thereto; they do by this very thing, whether they will or no, make that man Judge *which is the true Church*, and *the true Religion*. Becauſe it would be ridiculous to perſwade a man to turn to their Religion, and to urge him with Reaſons to do ſo, and yet to deny him the uſe of his own judgment whether their Reaſons be ſufficient to move them to make ſuch a change. Now, as the *Apoſtle* reaſons in another caſe, if men be fit to judge for themſelves in ſo great and important a matter as the choice of their Religion, why ſhould they be thought *unworthy to judge in leſſer matters*? They tell us indeed that a man may uſe his judgment in the choice of his Religion; but when he hath once choſen, he is then for ever to reſign up his judgment to their Church: But what tolerable reaſon can any man give, why a man ſhould be fit to judge upon the *whole*, and yet unfit to judge upon *particlar* Points? eſpecially if it be conſidered, that no man can make a diſcreet judgment of any Religion, before he hath examined the particular Doctrines of it, and made a judgment concerning *them*. Is it credible, that God ſhould give a man judgment in the moſt fundamental and important matter of all, viz. *To diſcern the true Religion*, and *the true Church*, *from the falſe*; for no other end, but to enable him to chuſe once for all to whom he ſhould reſign and inſlave his judgment for ever? which is juſt as reaſonable as if one ſhould ſay, That God hath given a man eyes for no other end, but to look out once for all, and to pitch upon a diſcreet perſon to lead him about blindfold all the days of his life. I come now to the

III. III. Thing I propounded, which is, *To Anſwer the main objection of our Adverſaries againſt this Principle*; and likewiſe to ſhew that there is no ſuch Reaſon and neceſſity for an univerſal Infallible Judge, as they pretend. Now their great Objection is this, if every man may judge for himſelf, there will be nothing but confuſion in Religion, there will be no end of Controverſies: ſo that an univerſal infallible Judge is neceſſary, and without this God had not made ſufficient proviſion for the aſſurance of men's Faith, and for the Peace and unity of his Church: Or, as it is expreſſed in the *Canon Law*, *aliter Dominus non videretur fuiſſe diſcretus*, *otherwiſe our Lord had not ſeem'd to be diſcreet*. How plauſible ſoever this Objection may appear, I do not deſpair but if men will lay aſide prejudice, and impartially conſider things, to make it abundantly evident, that this ground is not ſufficient to found an Infallible Judge upon. And therefore in anſwer to it, I deſire theſe following particulars may be conſidered.

Firſt, That this which they ſay, rather proves what God ſhould have done according to their fancy, than what he hath really and actually done. My *Text* expreſly bids Chriſtians to *try the Spirits,* which to any man's ſenſe does imply that they may judge of theſe matters: But the Church of *Rome* ſays they may not; becauſe if this liberty were permitted, God had not ordered things wiſely, and for the beſt, for the peace and unity of his Church. But, as the *Apoſtle* ſays in another caſe, *What art thou, O man, that objecteſt againſt God?*

Secondly, If this reaſoning be good, we may as well conclude that there is an univerſal infallible Judge ſet over the whole world in all *Temporal* matters, to whoſe Authority all mankind is bound to ſubmit. Becauſe this is as neceſſary to the peace of the World, as the other is to the peace of the Church. And men ſurely are every whit as apt to be obſtinate and perverſe about matters of Temporal Right, as about matters of Faith. But it is evident in fact and experience that there is no ſuch univerſal Judge, appointed by God over the whole World, to decide all Caſes of temporal Right; and for want of him the World is fain to ſhift as well as it can. But now a very acute and ſcholaſtical man that would argue that God muſt needs have done whatever he fancies convenient for the World ſhould be done, might by the very ſame way of Reaſoning conclude the neceſſity of an univerſal infallible Judge in Civil matters as well as in matters of Religion: And their *aliter Dominus non videretur fuiſſe diſcretus, otherwiſe God had not ſeem'd to be diſcreet,* is every whit as cogent and as civil, in the one Caſe as the other.

Thirdly, There is no need of ſuch a Judge, to aſſure men in matters of Religion; Becauſe men be ſufficiently certain without him. I hope it may be certain and clear enough *That there is a God;* and *That his Providence governs the World:* and *That there is another life after this,* though neither Pope nor Council had ever declared any thing about theſe matters. And for Revealed Doctrines, we may be certain enough of all that is neceſſary, if it be true which the *Fathers* tell us, *That all things neceſſary are plainly revealed in the Holy Scriptures.*

Fourthly, An infallible Judge, if there were one, is no certain way to end Controverſies, and to preſerve the unity of the Church; unleſs it were likewiſe infallibly certain, *That there is ſuch a Judge,* and, *Who he is.* For till men were ſure of both theſe, there would ſtill be a Controverſie whether there be an infallible Judge, and who he is. And if it be true which they tell us, *That without an infallible Judge Controverſies cannot be ended,* then a Controverſie concerning an infallible Judge can never be ended. And there are *two* Controverſies actually on foot about an infallible Judge; One, *Whether there be an infallible Judge or not?* which is a Controverſie between Us and the Church of *Rome*: and the other, *Who this infallible Judge is?* which is a Controverſie among themſelves, which could never yet be decided: And yet till it be decided, Infallibility, if they had it, would be of no uſe to them for the ending of Controverſies.

Fifthly, There is no ſuch abſolute need, as is pretended, of determining all Controverſies in Religion. If men would deveſt themſelves of prejudice and intereſt, as they ought in matters of Religion, the neceſſary things of Religion are plain enough, and men would generally agree well enough about them: But if men will ſuffer themſelves to be byaſſed by theſe, they would not hearken to an infallible Judge, if there were one; or they would find out ſome way or other to call his Infallibility into queſtion. And as for doubtful and leſſer matters in Religion, charity and mutual forbearance among Chriſtians would make the Church as peaceable and happy as perhaps it was ever deſign'd to be in this World, without abſolute unity in Opinion.

Sixthly and *Laſtly*, Whatever may be the inconvences of mens judging for themſelves in Religion, yet taking this Principle with the Cautions I have given, I doubt not to make it appear, that the inconveniences are far the leaſt on that ſide. The preſent condition of humane Nature doth not admit of any conſtitution of things, whether in Religion or Civil matters, which is free from all kind of exception and inconvenience: That is the beſt ſtate of things which is liable to the leaſt and feweſt. If men be modeſt, and humble, and willing to learn, God has done that which is ſufficient for the aſſurance of our Faith, and for the peace of his Church, without an infallible Judge: And if men will not be ſo, I cannot tell what would be ſufficient. I am ſure there were Hereſies and Schiſms in the *Apoſtles* Times, when Thoſe who governed the Church were certainly guided by an infallible Spirit. God hath appointed Guides and Teachers for us in matters of Religion, and if we will be contented to be inſtructed by them in thoſe neceſſary Articles and Duties of Religion, which are plainly contained in Scripture; and to be counſelled and directed by them in things that are more doubtfull and difficult, I do not ſee why we might not do well enough without any infallible Judge or Guide.

But ſtill it will be ſaid, Who ſhall Judge what things are plain and what doubtful? The anſwer to this, in my opinion, is not difficult. For if there be any thing plain in Religion, every man that hath been duly inſtructed in the Principles of Religion can judge of it, or elſe it is not plain. But there are ſome things in Religion ſo very plain, that no Guide or Judge can in reaſon claim that Authority over men, as to oblige them to believe or do the contrary; no, though he pretend to Infallibility; no, though he were an *Apoſtle*, though he were an *Angel from Heaven*. St. *Paul* puts the caſe ſo high, Gal. 1. 8. *Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Goſpel unto you, than what you have received, let him be accurſed*: which plainly ſuppoſeth that Chriſtians may and can judge when Doctrines are contrary to the Goſpel. What? not believe an *Apoſtle*, nor *an Angel from heaven*, if he ſhould teach any thing evidently contrary to the plain Doctrine of the Goſpel? If he ſhould determine Vertue to be Vice, and Vice to be Vertue? No; not an Apoſtle, nor an Angel; becauſe ſuch a Doctrine as this would confound and overturn all things in Religion. And yet *Bellarmin* puts this very Caſe, and ſays, if the Pope ſhould ſo determine, *we were bound to believe him, unleſs we would ſin againſt Conſcience.*

I will conclude this Diſcourſe by putting a very plain and familiar Caſe; by which it will appear what credit and authority is fit to be given to a Guide, and what not. Suppoſe I came a Stranger into *England*, and landing at *Dover* took a Guide there to conduct me in my way to *York*, which I knew before by the *Mapp* to lie *North* of *Dover*: having committed my ſelf to him, if he lead me for two or three days together out of any plain Road, and many times over hedge and ditch, I cannot but think it ſtrange, that in a Civil and well inhabited Country there ſhould be no Highways from one part of it to another: Yet thus far I ſubmit to him, though not without ſome regret and impatience. But then if after this, for two or three days more he lead me directly *South*, and with my face full upon the Sun at noonday, and at laſt bring me back again to *Dover Pere*; and ſtill bids me follow him: Then certainly no Modeſty do's oblige a man not to diſpute with his Guide, and to tell him ſurely that can be no way becauſe it is *Sea*. Now though he ſet never ſo bold a face upon the matter, and tell me with all the gravity and authority in the world, That it is not *the Sea* but *dry Land* under the *ſpecies* and *appearance of Water*; and that whatever my eyes tell me, having once committed my ſelf to his guidance, I muſt not truſt my own ſenſes in the caſe; it being one of the moſt dangerous ſorts of Infidelity for a man to believe his own eyes rather than his *faithful* and *infallible Guide*: All this moves me not; But I begin to expoſtulate roundly with him, and to let him underſtand that if I muſt not believe what I ſee, he is like to be of no farther uſe to me; becauſe I ſhall not be able, at this rate, to know whether I have a Guide, and whether I follow him or not. In ſhort, I tell him plainly, that when I took him for my Guide, I did not take him to tell me the difference between *North* and *South*, between a *Hedge* and a *High way*, between *Sea* and *dry Land*; all this I knew before, as well as he or any man elſe could tell me; but I took him to conduct and direct me the neareſt way to *York*. And therefore after all his impertinent talk; after all his Motives of Credibility to perſwade me to believe him, and all his confident *ſayings*, which he gravely calls *Demonſtrations*, I ſtand ſtiffly upon the ſhore, and leave my learned and reverend Guide to take his own courſe, and to diſpoſe of himſelf as he pleaſeth; but firmly reſolved not to follow him. And is any man to be blamed that breaks with his Guide upon theſe Terms?

And this is truly the Caſe, when a man commits himſelf to the Guidance of any Perſon or Church: if by vertue of this Authority they will needs perſwade me out of my ſenſes, and not to believe *what I ſee*, but *what they ſay*; *that Vertue is Vice, and Vice Vertue*, if they declare them to be ſo: And that becauſe they ſay they are infallible, I am to receive all their Dictates for Oracles, tho never ſo evidently falſe and abſurd in the Judgment of all Mankind: In this caſe there is no way to be rid of theſe unreaſonable People, but to deſire of them, ſince one kindneſs deſerves another, and all Contradictions are alike eaſie to be believed, that *they* would be pleaſed to believe that Infidelity is Faith, and that when I abſolutely renounce their Authority, I do yield a moſt perfect ſubmiſſion and obedience to it.

Upon the whole matter, all the Revelations of God, as well as the Laws of men, go upon this preſumption, that men are not ſtark fools; but that they will conſider their Intereſt and have ſome regard to the great concernment of their eternal Salvation. And this is as much to ſecure men from miſtake in matters of Belief, as God hath afforded to keep men from ſin in matters of Practice. He hath made no effectual and infallible proviſion that men ſhall not ſin; and yet it would puzzle any man to give a good Reaſon, why God ſhould take more care to ſecure men againſt Errors in belief, than againſt ſin and wickedneſs in their Lives.

I ſhall now only draw *three or four* Inferences from this Diſcourſe which I have made, and ſo conclude.

1. *That it is every mans Duty who hath ability and capacity for it, to endeavour to underſtand the grounds of his Religion.* For to try Doctrines is to enquire into the grounds and reaſons of them; which the better any man underſtands, the more firmly he will be eſtabliſhed in the Truth, and be the more reſolute in the day of Trial, and the better able to withſtand the Arts and aſſaults of cunning Adverſaries, and the fierce ſtorms of Perſecution. And on the contrary, that man will ſoon be moved from his ſtedfaſtneſs who never examined the Grounds and Reaſons of his belief. When it comes to the Trial, he that hath but little to ſay for his Religion will probably neither do nor ſuffer much for it.

2. *That all Doctrines are vehemently to be ſuſpected which decline Trial,* and are ſo loath to be brought into the light; which will not endure a fair Examination, but magiſterially require an implicite Faith: Whereas Truth is bold and full of courage, and loves to appear openly; and is ſo ſecure and confident of her own ſtrength as to offer her ſelf to the ſevereſt Trial and Examination. But to deny all liberty of Enquiry and Judgment in matters of Religion is the greateſt injury and diſparagement to Truth that can be, and a tacite acknowledgment that ſhe lies under ſome diſadvantage, and that there is leſs to be ſaid for her than for Error.

I have often wonder'd why the People in the Church of *Rome* do not ſuſpect their Teachers and Guides to have ſome ill deſign upon them, when they do ſo induſtriouſly debar them of the means of Knowledge, and are ſo very loath to let them underſtand what it is that we have to ſay againſt their Religion. For can any thing in the world be more ſuſpicious than to perſwade men, to put out their eyes, upon promiſe that they will help them to a much better and more faithfull Guide? If any Church, any profeſſion of men, be unwilling their Doctrines ſhould be expoſed to Trial, it is a certain ſign they know ſomething by them that is faulty, and which will not dure the light. This is the account which our Saviour gives us in a like caſe, It was *becauſe men's deeds were evil* that *they loved darkneſs rather than light.* For *every one that doth evil hateth the light; neither cometh he to the light leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved: But he that doth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifeſt that they are wrought in God.*

3. Since Reaſon and Chriſtianity allow this liberty to private perſons to judge for themſelves in matters of Religion, we ſhould uſe this privilege with much modeſty and humility, with great ſubmiſſion and deference to our Spiritual Rulers and Guides, whom God hath appointed in his Church. And there is very great need of this Caution, ſince by experience we find this liberty ſo much abuſed by many to the nouriſhing of Pride and Self-conceit, of Diviſion and faction; and thoſe who are leaſt able to judge, to be frequently the moſt forward and confident, the moſt peremptory and perverſe: and inſtead of demeaning themſelves with the ſubmiſſion of Learners, to aſſume to themſelves the authority of Judges, even in the moſt doubtfull and diſputable matters.

The Tyranny of the *Roman* Church over the Minds and Conſciences of men is not to be juſtified upon any account; but nothing puts ſo plauſible a colour upon it, as the ill uſe that is too frequently made of this natural Privilege of mens judging for themſelves in a matter of ſo infinite concernment, as that of their eternal happineſs. But then it is to be conſidered, that the proper remedy in this Caſe, is not to deprive men of this Privilege, but to uſe the beſt means to prevent the abuſe of it. For though the *inconveniences* ariſing from the ill uſe of it may be very great, yet the *miſchief* on the other hand is intolerable. Religion it ſelf is liable to be abuſed to very bad purpoſes, and frequently is ſo; but it is not therefore beſt that there ſhould be no Religion: And yet this Objection, if it be of any force and purſued home, is every whit as ſtrong againſt Religion it ſelf, as againſt mens liberty of judging in matters of Religion. Nay I add farther, that no man can judiciouſly embrace the true Religion, unleſs he be permitted to judge, whether that which he embraces be the true Religion or not.

4. When upon due Trial and Examination we are well ſetled and eſtabliſh'd in our Religion, *let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering;* and not be *like Children, toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, through the ſleight of men, and the cunning craftineſs of thoſe*

who lie in wait to deceive. And above all, let us reſolve to live according to the excellent Rules and Precepts of our holy Religion; let us heartily obey that Doctrine which we profeſs to believe. We, who enjoy the *Proteſtant* Religion, have all the means and advantages of underſtanding the Will of God, free liberty and full ſcope of enquiring into it: and informing our ſelves concerning it: We have all the opportunities we can wiſh of coming to the knowledge of our Duty: The Oracles of God lie open to us, and his Law is continually before our eyes; *his word is nigh unto us in our mouths and in our hearts*; (that is, we may read it and meditate upon it) *that we may do it*: *The Key of Knowledge is* put into our hands, ſo that if we do not *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, it is we our ſelves that ſhut our ſelves out. And where there is nothing to hinder us from the knowledge of our Duty, there certainly nothing can excuſe us from the practice of it. For the end of all knowledge is to direct men in their duty, and effectually to engage them to the performance of it: The great buſineſs of Religion is, *to make men truly good, and to teach them to live well.* And if Religion have not this effect, it matters not of what Church any man liſts and enters himſelf; for moſt certainly, *A bad man can be ſaved in none.* Tho a man know the right way to Heaven never ſo well, and be entred into it, yet if he will not walk therein, he ſhall never come thither: Nay, it will be an aggravation of this man's unhappineſs, that he was loſt in the way to Heaven, and periſh'd in the very road to Salvation. But if we will in good earneſt apply our ſelves to the practice of Religion, and the obedience of God's Holy Laws, his Grace will never be wanting to us to ſo good a purpoſe.

I have not time to recommend Religion to you at large, with all its advantages. I will compriſe what I have to ſay in a few words, and mind them at your peril. Let that which is our great concernment be our great care, *To know the truth and to do it, To fear God and keep his Commandments.* Conſidering the Reaſonableneſs and the Reward of Piety and Virtue, nothing can be wiſer; conſidering the mighty aſſiſtance of God's Grace, which he is ready to afford us, and the unſpeakable ſatisfaction and delight which is to be had in the doing of our duty, nothing can be eaſier: Nothing will give us that pleaſure, while we live; nothing can miniſter that true and ſolid comfort to us, when we come to die: There is probably no ſuch way for a man to be happy in this World; to be ſure, there is no way but this to eſcape the intolerable and endleſs miſeries of another World.

Now God grant that we may all know and do in this our day, the things that belong to our peace, for his Mercies ſake in Jeſus Chriſt: To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all Honour and Glory now and for ever. Amen.

A
SERMON
Preached at the
ASSIZES
HELD AT
KINGSTON upon THAMES,
July 21. 1681.

TO THE
Right Worſhipful and my Honoured Friend
JOSEPH REEVE, Eſq;
High Sheriff of the
County of SURREY.

SIR,

WHen I had perform'd the Service which you were pleaſed to call me to in the preaching of this Sermon, I had no thoughts of making it more publick; And yet in this alſo I was the more eaſily induced to comply with your deſire, becauſe of the ſuitableneſs of the Argument to the Age in which we live; wherein as men have run into the wildeſt extremities in other things, ſo particularly in the matter of Oaths; ſome making Conſcience of taking any Oaths at all, and too many none at all of breaking them.

To convince the great miſtake of the one extreme, and to check the growing evil and miſchief of the other, is the chief deſign of this Diſcourſe. To which I ſhall be very glad if by God's bleſſing it may prove any-wiſe ſerviceable. I am

Sir,

Your very faithful and humble Servant,

Jo. Tillotſon.

SERMON XXII.

THE
Lawfulneſs and Obligation
OF
OATHS.

HEB. vi. 16.

And an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.

THE Neceſſity of Religion to the ſupport of humane Society in nothing appears more evidently than in this, That the obligation of an Oath, which is ſo neceſſary for the maintenance of peace and juſtice among men, depends wholly upon the ſence and belief of a Deity. For no reaſon can be imagined why any man that doth not believe a God, ſhould make the leaſt conſcience of an Oath, which is nothing elſe but a ſolemn appeal to God as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay. So that whoever promotes Atheiſm and Infidelity doth the moſt deſtructive thing imaginable to humane Society, becauſe he takes away the reverence and obligation of Oaths: And whenever that is generally caſt off, humane Society muſt disband, and all things run into diſorder. The juſt ſenſe whereof made *David* cry out to God with ſo much earneſtneſs, as if the world had been cracking, and the frame of it ready to break in pieces, *Pſal.* 12. *Help, Lord, for the righteous man ceaſeth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men*: Intimating, That when Faith fails from among men, nothing but a particular and immediate interpoſition of the Divine Providence can preſerve the world from falling into confuſion. And our Bleſſed Saviour gives this as a ſign of the end of the world, and the approaching diſſolution of all things, when faith and truth ſhall hardly be found among men, *Luke* 18. 8. *When the Son of man comes, ſhall he find Faith on the earth?* This ſtate of things doth loudly call for his coming to deſtroy the world, which is even ready to diſſolve and fall in pieces of it ſelf when theſe bands and pillars of humane Society do break and fail. And ſurely never in any age was this ſign of the coming of the Son of Man more glaring and terrible than in this degenerate Age wherein we live, when almoſt all ſorts of men ſeem to have broke looſe from all obligations to faith and truth.

And therefore I do not know any Argument more proper and uſeful to be treated of upon this Occaſion than of the Nature and Obligation of an *Oath*, which is the utmoſt ſecurity that one man can give to another of the truth of what he ſays; the ſtrongeſt tye of fidelity, the ſureſt ground of judicial proceedings, and the moſt firm and ſacred bond that can be laid upon all that are concerned in the adminiſtration of publick Juſtice; upon *Judge*, and *Jury*, and *Witneſſes*.

And for this reaſon I have pitched upon theſe words: In which the Apoſtle declares to us the great uſe and neceſſity of Oaths among men; *an Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.* He had ſaid before, that for our greater aſſurance and comfort God hath confirmed his promiſes to us by an Oath; condeſcending herein to deal with us after the manner of men, who when they would give credit to a doubtful matter confirm what they ſay by an Oath. And generally when any doubt or controverſie ariſeth between Parties concerning a matter of fact, one ſide affirming and the other denying, an end is put to this conteſt by an Oath; *An Oath for confirmation being to them an end of all ſtrife: An Oath for confirmation*, εἰς βεβαίωσιν, for the greater aſſurance and eſtabliſhment of a thing: Not that an Oath is always a certain and infallible deciſion of things according to truth and right, but that this is the utmoſt credit that we can give to any thing, and the laſt reſort of truth and confidence among men: After this we can go no farther, for if the Religion of an Oath will not oblige men to ſpeak truth nothing will. This is the utmoſt ſecurity that men can give, and muſt therefore be the final deciſion of all conteſts; *An Oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.*

Now from this aſſertion of the Apoſtle concerning the great uſe and end of Oaths among men, I ſhall take occaſion,

1. To conſider the *nature* of an Oath, and the *kinds* of it.
2. To ſhew the great *uſe* and even *neceſſity* of Oaths, in many caſes.
3. To vindicate the *lawfulneſs* of them where they are neceſſary.
4. To ſhew the ſacred *obligation* of an Oath. I ſhall be as brief in theſe as the juſt handling of them will bear.

I. For the *nature* of an Oath, and the *kinds* of it. An *Oath is an invocation of God, or an appeal to him as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay.* So that an Oath is a ſacred thing, as being an act of Religion and an invocation of the Name of God: And this, whether the Name of God be expreſly mentioned in it or not. If a man only ſay, *I ſwear*, or *I take my Oath*, that a thing is, or is not, ſo or ſo; or that I will, or will not, do ſuch a thing: Or if a man *anſwer upon his oath*, being abjured and required ſo to do: Or if a man *ſwear by Heaven, or by Earth*, or by any other thing that hath relation to God; in all theſe caſes a man doth virtually call God to witneſs; and in ſo doing he doth by conſequence invoke him as a Judge and an Avenger, in caſe what he ſwears be not true: And if this be expreſt, the Oath is a formal Imprecation; but whether it be, or not, a curſe upon our ſelves is always implied in caſe of perjury.

There are *two* ſorts of Oaths, *Aſſertory*, and *Promiſſory*. An *aſſertory* Oath is when a man affirms or denies upon oath a matter of fact, paſt, or preſent: when he ſwears that a thing was, or is ſo, or not ſo. A *promiſſory*

Oath is a promiſe confirmed by an oath, which always reſpects ſomething that is future: And if the promiſe be made directly and immediately to *God*, then it is called a *Vow*; if to *men*, an *Oath*. I proceed to the

II. Thing, which is to ſhew the great *uſe* and even *neceſſity* of Oaths, in many caſes: which is ſo great, that humane Society can very hardly, if at all, ſubſiſt long without them. Government would many times be very inſecure, and for the faithful diſcharge of Offices of great truſt, in which the welfare of the publick is nearly concerned, it is not poſſible to find any ſecurity equal to that of an Oath; becauſe the obligation of that reacheth to the moſt ſecret and hidden practices of men, and takes hold of them in many caſes where the penalty of no humane Law can have any awe or force upon them: and eſpecially, it is (as the *Civil Law* expreſſeth it) *maximum expediendarum litium remedium*, the beſt means of ending controverſies. And where mens eſtates or lives are concerned, no evidence but what is aſſured by an Oath will be thought ſufficient to decide the matter, ſo as to give full and general ſatisfaction to mankind. For in matters of ſo great concernment, when men have all the aſſurance that can be had, and not till then, they are contented to ſit down and reſt ſatisfied with it. And among all nations an Oath hath always been thought the only peremptory and ſatisfactory way of deciding ſuch controverſies. II.

III. The *third* thing I propoſed was to vindicate the *lawfulneſs* of Oaths, where they are neceſſary. And it is a very ſtrong inducement to believe the lawfulneſs of them, that the unavoidable condition of humane affairs hath made them ſo neceſſary. The Apoſtle takes it for granted that an Oath is not only of great uſe in humane affairs, but in many caſes of great neceſſity, to confirm a doubtful thing, and to put an end to controverſies which cannot otherwiſe be decided to the ſatisfaction of the Parties contending; *An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife.* And indeed it is hardly imaginable that God ſhould not have left that lawful, which is ſo evidently neceſſary to the peace and ſecurity of mankind. III.

But becauſe there is a *Sect*, ſprung up in our memory, which hath called in queſtion the lawfulneſs of all Oaths, to the great miſchief and diſturbance of humane Society, I ſhall endeavour to ſearch this matter to the bottom, and to manifeſt how unreaſonable and groundleſs this Opinion is. And to this end, I ſhall

Firſt, Prove the lawfulneſs of Oaths from the authority of this Text, and from the reaſons plainly contained, or ſtrongly implied in it.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew the weakneſs and inſufficiency of the grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from Reaſon, or from Scripture, which laſt they principally rely upon; and if it could be made out from thence would determine the caſe.

1. I ſhall prove the lawfulneſs of Oaths from the authority of this Text, and the reaſons plainly contained, or ſtrongly implied in it. Becauſe the Apoſtle doth not only ſpeak of the uſe of Oaths among men without any manner of cenſure and reproof, but as a commendable cuſtom and practice, and in many caſes neceſſary for the confirmation of doubtful matters, and in order to the final deciſion of Controverſies and Differences among men. For

Firſt, He ſpeaks of it as the general practice of mankind, to confirm things by an oath in order to the ending of differences. And indeed there is nothing that hath more univerſally obtained in all Ages and Nations of the world; than which there is not a more certain indication that a thing is agreeable to the Law of Nature and the beſt Reaſon of Mankind. And that this was no degenerate practice of Mankind, like that of Idolatry, is from hence evident; that when God ſeparated a people to himſelf, it was practiſed among them, by the holy Patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*; and was afterwards not only allowed, but in many Caſes commanded by the Law of *Moſes*; which had it been a thing evil in it ſelf and forbidden by the Law of Nature, would not have been done.

Secondly, Another undeniable Argument from the Text of the lawfulneſs of Oaths is, that God himſelf, in condeſcention to the cuſtom of men who uſe to confirm and give credit to what they ſay by an Oath, is repreſented by the Apoſtle as confirming his promiſe to us by an Oath, ver. 13. *When God made the promiſe to Abraham, becauſe he could ſwear by none greater, he ſwears by himſelf. For men verily ſwear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all ſtrife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the heirs of promiſe the immutability of his counſel, confirmed it by an oath:* which he certainly would not have done, had an oath been unlawful in it ſelf. For that had been to comply with men in an evil practice, and by his own example to give countenance to it in the higheſt manner: But though God condeſcend to repreſent himſelf to us after the manner of men, he never does it in any thing that is in its own nature evil and ſinful.

Thirdly, From the great Uſefulneſs of Oaths in humane affairs, to give credit and confirmation to our word, and to put an end to Conteſtations. Now that which ſerves to ſuch excellent purpoſes, and is ſo convenient for humane ſociety, and for mutual ſecurity and confidence among men, ought not eaſily to be preſumed unlawful, till it be plainly proved to be ſo. And if we conſider the nature of an oath, and every thing belonging to it, there is nothing that hath the leaſt appearance of evil in it. There is ſurely no evil in it, as it is an act of Religion; nor as it is an appeal to God as a witneſs and avenger in caſe we ſwear falſly; nor as it is a confirmation of a doubtful matter; nor as it puts an end to ſtriſe and controverſie. And theſe are all the eſſential ingredients of an Oath, and the ends of it; and they are all ſo good, that they rather commend it, than give the leaſt colour of ground to condemn it. I proceed in the

Second place, to ſhew the weakneſs and inſufficiency of the grounds of the contrary Opinion; whether from *Reaſon* or from *Scripture*.

Firſt, From *Reaſon*. They ſay the neceſſity of an Oath is occaſioned by the want of truth and fidelity among men. And that every man ought to demean himſelf with that faithfulneſs and integrity as may give credit and confirmation to his word; and then Oaths will be needleſs. This pretence will be fully anſwered if we conſider theſe two things.

1. That in matters of great importance no other obligation, beſides that of an oath, hath been thought ſufficient amongſt the beſt and wiſeſt of men to aſſert their fidelity to one another. *Even the beſt men* (to uſe the words of a great Author) *have not truſted the beſt men without it.* As we ſee in very remarkable inſtances, where Oaths have paſſed between thoſe who might be thought to have the greateſt confidence in one another: As between *Abraham* and his old faithful ſervant *Eliezer*, concerning the choice of a wife for his Son: Between Father and Son, *Jacob* and *Joſeph*, concerning the burial of his Father in the Land of *Canaan*: Between two of the deareſt and moſt intimate Friends, *David* and *Jonathan*, to aſſure their Friendſhip to one another; and it had its effect long after *Jonathan*'s death

in the ſaving of *Mephiboſheth*, when reaſon of State and the ſecurity of his Throne ſeem'd to move *David* ſtrongly to the contrary; for it is expreſly ſaid 2 *Sam.* 21. 7. that *David* ſpared *Mephiboſheth*, *Jonathan*'s *Son*, *becauſe of the oath of the Lord that was between them*; implying, that had it not been for his oath, other conſiderations might probably have prevail'd with him to have permitted him to have been cut off with the reſt of *Saul*'s Children.

2. This Reaſon, which is alledged againſt Oaths among men, is much ſtronger againſt God's confirming his promiſes to us by an Oath. For he who is truth it ſelf is ſurely of all other moſt to be credited upon his bare word, and his oath needleſs to give confirmation to it; and yet he condeſcends to add his oath to his word; and therefore that reaſon is evidently of no force.

Secondly, From *Scripture*. Our Saviour ſeems altogether to forbid ſwearing in any caſe, *Matth.* 5. 33, 34. *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid to them of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf: but I ſay unto you ſwear not at all; neither by heaven*, &c. *But let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of evil.* And this Law St. *James* recites, *chap.* 5. *verſ.* 12. as that which Chriſtians ought to have a very particular and principal regard to; *above all things my brethren ſwear not*: And he makes the breach of this Law a damning ſin, *leſt ye fall into condemnation.* But the Authority of our Saviour alone is ſufficient, and therefore I ſhall only conſider that Text.

And, becauſe here lies the main ſtrength of this opinion of the unlawfulneſs of Oaths, it is very fit that this Text be fully conſider'd; and that it be made very evident, that it was not our Saviour's meaning by this prohibition wholly to forbid the uſe of Oaths.

But before I enter upon this matter, I will readily grant, that there is ſcarce any Errour whatſoever that hath a more plauſible colour from Scripture, than this; which makes the caſe of thoſe who are ſeduced into it the more pityable: But then it ought to be conſider'd, how much this Doctrine of the unlawfulneſs of Oaths reflects upon the Chriſtian Religion: ſince it is ſo evidently prejudicial both to humane Society in general, and particularly to thoſe perſons that entertain it: neither of which ought raſhly to be ſuppoſed and taken for granted, concerning any Law delivered by our Saviour: Becauſe upon theſe terms it will be very hard for us to vindicate the divine wiſdom of our Saviour's Doctrine, and the Reaſonableneſs of the Chriſtian Religion. Of the inconvenience of this Doctrine to humane Society, I have ſpoken already. But beſides this, it is very prejudicial to them that hold it. It renders them ſuſpected to Government, and in many caſes incapable of the common benefits of Juſtice and other priviledges of humane Society, and expoſeth them to great penalties as the conſtitution of all Laws and Governments at preſent is, and it is not eaſie to imagine how they ſhould be otherwiſe. And which is very conſiderable in this matter, it ſets thoſe who refuſe Oaths upon very unequal terms with the reſt of Mankind, if where the eſtates and lives of men are equally concern'd, their bare teſtimonies ſhall be admitted without an Oath, and others ſhall be obliged to ſpeak upon Oath: Nothing being more certain in experience, than that many men will lie for their intereſt when they will not be perjured, God having planted in the natural Conſciences of men a ſecret dread of perjury above moſt other ſins. And this inconvenience is ſo great, as to render thoſe who refuſe oaths in all caſes almoſt intolerable to humane Society. I ſpeak not this either to bring them into trouble, or to perſwade them to meaſure truth by their intereſt: but on the other hand I muſt needs ſay, that it is no Argument either of a wiſe or good man to take up any opinion, eſpecially ſuch a one as is greatly to his prejudice, upon ſlight grounds. And this very conſideration that it is ſo much to their inconvenience, may juſtly move them to be very careful in the examination of it.

This being premis'd, I come now to explain this Prohibition of our Saviour; and to this purpoſe, I deſire theſe *three* things may be well conſider'd.

Firſt, That ſeveral circumſtances of theſe words of our Saviour do manifeſtly ſhew that they ought to be interpreted in a limited ſence, as only forbidding ſwearing in common converſation; *needleſs* and *heedleſs* oaths (as one expreſſeth it) and in general all voluntary ſwearing unleſs upon ſome great and weighty cauſe, in which the glory of God and the good of the ſouls of Men is concerned. For that in ſuch caſes a voluntary Oath may be lawfull, I am induced to believe from the example of St. *Paul*, who uſeth it more than once upon ſuch occaſions; of which I ſhall hereafter give particular Inſtances.

And this was the ſence of wiſe men among the *Heathen*, that men ſhould not ſwear but upon neceſſity and great occaſion. Thus *Euſebius*, the Philoſopher in *Stobæus*, counſels men. *Some* (ſays he) *adviſe men to be carefull to ſwear the truth*; *but I adviſe principally that men do not eaſily ſwear at all*, that is, not upon any ſlight but only upon weighty occaſions; To the ſame purpoſe *Epictetus*, *Shun oaths wholly, if it be poſſible*; *if not, however as much as thou canſt*: And ſo likewiſe *Simplicius* in his *Comment* upon him, *We ought wholly to ſhun ſwearing, except upon occaſions of great neceſſity.* And *Quintilian* among the *Romans*, *In totum jurare, niſi ubi neceſſe eſt, gravi viro parum convenit*; *To ſwear at all, except where it is neceſſary, do's not well ſuit with a wiſe man.*

And, that this prohibition of our Saviour's ought to be underſtood of Oaths in ordinary converſation, appears from the oppoſition which our Saviour makes, *Swear not at all*; *but let your communication be yea, yea*; That is, in your ordinary commerce and affairs do not interpoſe oaths, but ſay and do. And this is very much confirmed, in that our Saviour do's not under this general Prohibition, inſtance in ſuch oaths as are expreſly by the name of God: The reaſon whereof is this; The *Jews* thought it unlawfull in ordinary communication to ſwear expreſly by the name of God, but lawfull to ſwear by the Creatures, as by *Heaven* and *Earth*, *&c.* So that our Saviour's meaning is as if he had ſaid, You think you may ſwear in common converſation provided you do not ſwear by the Name of God; but I ſay unto you, let your communication be without oaths of any kind: you ſhall not ſo much as ſwear by *heaven* or by *earth*, becauſe God is virtually invoked in every oath. And unleſs we ſuppoſe this to be our Saviour's meaning, I do not ſee what good Reaſon can be given why our Saviour ſhould only forbid them to ſwear by the Creatures, and not much rather by the Name of God; ſuch oaths being ſurely of all others moſt to be avoided, as being the moſt direct abuſe and profanation of the Name of God.

Secondly, It is very conſiderable to the explaining of this Prohibition, that there are the like general expreſſions in other *Jewiſh* Authors concerning this very matter, which yet muſt of neceſſity be thus limited. *Maimonides*, from the ancient *Rabbies*, gives this Rule, that *it is beſt not to ſwear at all.* And *Philo* uſeth almoſt the ſame words. And *Rabbi Jonathan* comes very near our Saviour's expreſſion, when he ſays, *The juſt man will not ſwear at all*;

all; not ſo much as by the common Names of God, nor by his Attributes, nor by his Works, as by Heaven, or the Angels, or the Law. Now it is not imaginable, that theſe learned *Jews* ſhould condemn Oaths in all caſes, when the Law of *Moſes* did in many caſes expreſly require them. And therefore they are to be underſtood of voluntary oaths in ordinary converſation. And that the *Jews* meant this by not ſwearing at all, ſeems to be very plain from a paſſage in *Joſephus*, who ſays that the Sect of the *Eſſenes* forbad their Diſciples to ſwear at all; and yet he tells us at the ſame time, that they who were admitted into that Sect took an oath to obſerve the Laws and Rules of it. So that they who forbad to ſwear at all, allowed of Oaths impoſed by the Authority of Superiours.

Thirdly, Which will peremptorily decide this matter, this Prohibition of our Saviour's cannot be underſtood to forbid all Oaths, without a plain contradiction to the undoubted practice of the primitive Chriſtians, and of the Apoſtles, and even of our Lord himſelf. *Origen* and *Tertullian* tell us, that the Chriſtians refuſed to ſwear by the Emperor's *Genius*; not becauſe it was an Oath, but becauſe they thought it to be Idolatrous: But the ſame *Tertullian* ſays, that the Chriſtians were willing to ſwear *per ſalutem Imperatoris, by the health and ſafety of the Emperour. Athanaſius* being accuſed to *Conſtantius* purged himſelf by oath, and deſired that his Accuſer might be put to his Oath *ſub atteſtatione veritatis, by calling the truth to witneſs*; by which form (ſays he) *we Chriſtians are wont to ſwear.* But which is more than this, S. *Paul*, upon weighty occaſions, do's ſeveral times in his *Epiſtles* call God to witneſs for the truth of what he ſays; which is the very formality of an oath. *God is my witneſs, Rom.* 1. 9. *As God is true, our word was not yea and nay,* 2 Cor. 1. 18. and *v.* 23. *I call God for a record upon my ſoul. Before God I lye not, Gal.* 1. 20. *God is my record, Phil.* 1. 8. *God is my witneſs,* 1 *Theſ.* 2. 5. Theſe are all unqueſtionable oaths; which we cannot imagine St. *Paul* would have uſed, had they been directly contrary to our Saviour's Law. And whereas ſome defend this upon account of his extraordinary Inſpiration, I cannot poſſibly ſee how this mends the matter. For certainly it is very inconvenient to ſay that they who were to teach the Precepts of Chriſt to others, did themſelves break them by inſpiration.

But I go yet farther, and ſhall urge an example beyond all exception. Our Saviour himſelf (who ſurely would not be the firſt example of breaking his own Laws) did not refuſe to anſwer upon oath, being called thereto at his Trial. So we find *Matth.* 26. 63. *The high Prieſt ſaid unto him, I abjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be Chriſt the Son of God*; that is, he required him to anſwer this queſtion upon Oath. For among the *Jews*, the form of giving an oath to witneſſes and others was not by tendring a formal oath to them, as the cuſtom is among us, but by adjuring them, that is, requiring them to anſwer upon oath: As is plain from *Levit.* 5. 1. *If a man hear the voice of ſwearing, and is a witneſs whether he hath ſeen or known of ſuch a thing, if he do not utter it, then he ſhall bear his Iniquity. If ye have heard the voice of ſwearing*, that is, if being adjured or demanded to anſwer upon oath concerning what he hath ſeen or heard, he do not utter the truth, he is perjured. Now to this adjuration of the high Prieſt our Saviour anſwered, *thou haſt ſaid*; which words are not an avoiding to anſwer (as ſome have thought) but a direct anſwer, as if he had ſaid, *it is as thou ſayeſt, it is even ſo, I am the Son of God.* For upon this anſwer the high Prieſt ſaid, *he hath ſpoken blaſphemy.* But to put the matter beyond all doubt, St. *Mark* tells us, *Mark* 14. 61. that he being aſked by the high Prieſt, *Art thou the Chriſt the Son of the Bleſſed? He anſwered, I am.*

I am. So that unleſs we will interpret our Saviour's Doctrine contrary to his own practice, we cannot underſtand him to forbid all Oaths, and conſequently they are not unlawfull.

I have been the longer upon this, that I might give clear ſatisfaction in this matter to thoſe that are willing to receive it.

As for the *Ceremonies* in uſe among us in the taking of Oaths, it is no juſt Exception againſt them, that they are not found in Scripture. For this was always matter of liberty; and ſeveral Nations have uſed ſeveral Rites and Ceremonies in their Oaths. It was the cuſtom of the *Grecians*, to ſwear laying their hands upon the Altar, *quod ſanctiſſimum jusjurandum eſt habitum*, (ſaith *A. Gellius*) *which was locked upon as the moſt ſacred form of ſwearing.* The *Romans* were wont *Jovem Lapidem jurare*; that is, he that ſwore by *Jupiter* held a flint ſtone in his hand, and flung it violently from him with theſe words, *Si ſciens fallo ita me Jupiter bonis, omnibus ejiciat ut ego hunc Lapidem: If I knowingly falſify, God ſo throw me out of all my poſſeſſions as I do this ſtone.*

In *Scripture* there are *two* Ceremonies mentioned of Swearing. *One*, of *putting the hand under the Thigh* of him to whom the Oath was *made*. Thus *Eliezer* ſwore to *Abraham*, *Gen.* 24. and *Joſeph* to *Jacob*, *Gen.* 47. The *other* was *by lifting up the hand to heaven*: Thus *Abraham* expreſſeth the manner of an Oath, *Gen.* 14. 22. *I have lift up my hand to the moſt high God.* And thus God condeſcending to the manner of men expreſſeth himſelf, *Deut.* 32. 40. *If I lift up my hand to heaven, and ſwear.* In alluſion to this Cuſtom the *Pſalmiſt* deſcribes the perjured perſon, *Pſal.* 144. 8. *Whoſe mouth ſpeaketh vanity; and whoſe right hand is a right hand of falſhood.* And there is not the leaſt intimation in Scripture that either of theſe Ceremonies were preſcribed and appointed by God, but voluntarily inſtituted and taken up by men. And thus among us the Ceremony of Swearing is *by laying the hand on the holy Goſpel*, and *kiſſing the book*; which is both very ſolemn and ſignificant. And this is the reaſon why this ſolemn kind of Oath is called, a *corporal* Oath, and was anciently ſo called; becauſe the ſign or ceremony of it is performed by ſome part of the *Body*. And this Solemnity is an aggravation of the Perjury, becauſe it makes it both more deliberate, and more ſcandalous.

I ſhall ſpeak but briefly to the

IV. IV. And laſt particular, *viz.* the ſacred *obligation* of an Oath: becauſe it is a ſolemn appeal to God as a witneſs of the truth of what we ſay: To God, I ſay, from whoſe piercing and all-ſeeing eye, from whoſe perfect and infinite knowledge nothing is or can be hid; So that there is not a thought in our heart but he ſees it, nor a word in our tongue but he diſcerns the truth or falſhood of it. Whenever we ſwear, we appeal to his knowledge, and refer our ſelves to his juſt judgment who is the powerful Patron and Protector of Right, and the Almighty Judge and avenger of all falſhood and unrighteouſneſs. So that it is not poſſible for men to lay a more ſacred and ſolemn obligation upon their Conſciences, than by the Religion of an Oath. *Moſes* very well expreſſeth it, by *binding our ſouls with a bond*, Numb. 30. 2. *If a man ſwear an oath, to bind his ſoul with a bond*; intimating that he that ſwears lays the ſtrongeſt obligation upon himſelf, and puts his Soul in pawn for the truth of what he ſays. And this obligation no man can violate, but at the utmoſt peril of the judgment and vengeance of God. For every Oath implies a Curſe upon our ſelves in caſe of Perjury, as *Plutarch* obſerves. And this was always the ſenſe of Mankind concerning the obligation of Oaths. *Nullum vinculum ad aſtringendam fidem majores noſtri jurejurando arctius* *eſſe voluerunt*, ſaith *Tully*: *Our forefathers had no ſtricter bond whereby to oblige the faith of men to one another, than that of an Oath.* To the ſame purpoſe is that in the *Comedian*, *Aliud ſi ſcirem, qui firmare meam apud vos poſſem fidem, ſanctius quam jusjurandum, id pollicerer tibi. If I knew any thing more ſacred than an Oath, whereby to confirm to you the truth of what I ſay, I would make uſe of it.*

I will crave your patience a little longer, whilſt by way of inference from this Diſcourſe, I repreſent to you the great Sin of *Swearing in common converſation*, upon trivial and needleſs occaſions, and the hainouſneſs of the ſin of *Perjury*.

1. *Firſt*, The great ſin of *Swearing*, upon trivial and needleſs occaſions, in common converſation. Becauſe an Oath is a ſolemn thing, and reſerved for great occaſions, to give confirmation to our word in ſome weighty matter, and to put an end to controverſies which cannot otherwiſe be peremptorily and ſatisfactorily decided. And therefore to uſe Oaths upon light occaſions argues great profaneneſs and irreverence of Almighty God. So *Vlpian* the great *Roman* Lawyer obſerves, *Nonnullus eſſe facilies ad jurandum contemptu Religionis, that mens proneneſs to ſwearing comes from a contempt of Religion*; than which nothing diſpoſeth men more to Atheiſm and Infidelity. Beſides that it doth many times ſurpriſe men unawares into Perjury: And how can it be otherwiſe, when men uſe to interlard all their careleſs talk with Oaths, but that they muſt often be Perjur'd? And which is worſe, it prepares men for deliberate perjury; For with thoſe who are accuſtomed to ſwear upon light occaſions, an Oath will go off with them more roundly about weightier matters. *From a common cuſtom of ſwearing* (ſaith *Hierocles*) *men eaſily ſlide into perjury: Therefore* (ſays he) *if thou wouldſt not be perjured, do not uſe to ſwear.* And this perhaps is the meaning of St. *James*, when he cautions Chriſtians ſo vehemently againſt common ſwearing, Ἵνα μὴ εἰς ὑπόκρισιν πέσητε, (for ſo ſome of the beſt ancient Copies read it) *leſt ye fall into hypocriſie*, that is, leſt ye lye and be perjured, by uſing your ſelves to raſh and inconſiderate ſwearing.

And men expoſe themſelves to this danger to no purpoſe; Oaths in common diſcourſe being ſo far from confirming a man's word, that with wiſe men they much weaken it: For common ſwearing (if it have any ſerious meaning at all) argues in a man a perpetual diſtruſt of his own reputation, and is an acknowledgment that he thinks his bare word not to be worthy of credit. And it is ſo far from adorning and filling a man's diſcourſe, that it makes it look ſwoln and bloated, and more bold and bluſtring, than becomes perſons of gentle and good breeding. Beſides that it is a great incivility, becauſe it highly offends and grates upon all ſober and conſiderate perſons; who cannot be preſumed with any manner of eaſe and patience to hear God affronted, and his great and glorious Name ſo irreverently toſt upon every ſlight occaſion.

And it is no excuſe to men that many times they do it ignorantly, and not obſerving and knowing what they do. For certainly it is no extenuation of a fault, that a man hath got the habit of it ſo perfect that he commits it when he does not think of it. Which conſideration ſhould make men oppoſe the beginnings of this Vice, leſt it grow into a habit very hard to be left. *Nemo novit, niſi qui expertus eſt, quam ſit difficile conſuetudinem jurandi extinguere*, ſaith St. *Auſtin*; *No man knows, but he that hath tryed, how hard it is to get rid of this cuſtom of Swearing*: But yet it is certain men may do it, by reſolution and great care of themſelves: For he that can chuſe whether he will ſpeak or not, can chuſe whether he will ſwear or not when he ſpeaks. *Major conſuetudo majorem intentionem flagitat*; *The more inveterate a cuſtom is, the greater care ſhould be uſed to break our ſelves of it.*

In ſhort, This practice is ſo contrary to ſo plain a Precept of our Saviour, and by the breach whereof we incur ſo great a danger (as St. *James* aſſures us) that it muſt be a great charity that can find out a way to reconcile a common cuſtom of ſwearing with a ſerious belief of the Chriſtian Religion: Which I would to God thoſe who are concerned would ſeriouſly lay to heart. Eſpecially, ſince this Sin of all others hath the leaſt of Temptation to it. Profit or Pleaſure there is none in it, nor any thing in mens natural tempers to incite them to it. For tho ſome men pour out Oaths ſo freely as if they came naturally from them, yet ſurely no man is born of a ſwearing conſtitution.

All that can be pretended for it, is Cuſtom and Faſhion: But to ſhew that this is no excuſe, it is very obſervable that it is particularly in the matter of Oaths and Perjury that the Holy Ghoſt gives that caution, *Thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil.*

And laſtly, it deſerves to be conſidered, that this ſin is ſo much the greater becauſe of the frequent returns of it in thoſe that are accuſtomed to it. So that although it were but ſmall in it ſelf (as it is not) yet the frequent practice of this ſin would quickly mount it up to a great ſcore.

2. *Secondly*, To repreſent the hainouſneſs of the ſin of *Perjury*. But before I aggravate this Crime, it is fit to let men know how many ways they may be guilty of it.

1*ſt*. When a man aſſerts upon Oath what he knows to be otherwiſe: Or promiſeth what he does not intend to perform. In both theſe caſes the very act of ſwearing is Perjury. And ſo likewiſe when a man promiſeth upon oath to do that which it is unlawful for him to do becauſe this oath is contrary to a former obligation.

2*dly*. When a man is uncertain whether what he ſwear to, be true. This likewiſe is Perjury, in the act; though not of the ſame degree of guilt with the former, becauſe it is not ſo fully and directly againſt his knowledge and conſcience. For men ought to be certain of the truth of what they aſſert upon oath, and not to ſwear at a venture. And therefore no man ought poſitively to ſwear to the truth of any thing but what he himſelf hath ſeen or heard: This being the higheſt aſſurance men are capable of in this World. In like manner, he is guilty of perjury in the ſame degree, who promiſeth upon oath what he is not morally and reaſonably certain he ſhall be able to perform.

3*dly*. They are likewiſe guilty of Perjury, who do not uſe great plainneſs and ſimplicity in oaths; but anſwer *equivocally* and doubtfully, or with reſervation of ſomething in their minds, thinking thereby to ſalve the truth of what they ſay. And we all know who they are that make uſe of theſe arts, and maintain them to be lawful; to the infinite ſcandal of the Chriſtian Religion and prejudice of humane Society, by doing what in them lies to deſtroy all Faith and mutual confidence among men. For what can be a greater affront to God, than to uſe his Name to deceive men? And what can more directly overthrow the great end and uſe of oaths, which are *for confirmation*, and to *put an end to Strife*? Whereas by theſe arts the thing is left in the ſame uncertainty it was before, and there is no deciſion of it. For there is hardly any form of words can be deviſed ſo plain, as not to be liable to Equivocation: To be ſure a man when he ſwears may always reſerve ſomething in his mind which will quite alter the ſenſe of whatever he can ſay or promiſe upon oath. And this may be laid down for a certain Rule, That all departure from the ſimplicity of an oath is a degree of Perjury, and a man is never a whit the leſs forſworn becauſe his perjury is a little finer and more artificial than ordinary. And though men think by this device to ſave themſelves harmleſs from the guilt of ſo great a ſin, they do really increaſe it, by adding to their iniquity the impudent folly of mocking God and deceiving themſelves.

And whereas it is pleaded in the favour of *mental reſervation*, that the whole Propoſition, as made up of what is expreſt in words and of that which is reſerved in the mind, is true; For inſtance, if a man being ask'd upon Oath whether he be a Prieſt, ſhall anſwer he is not, reſerving in his mind that he is not a Prieſt of *Bacchus*, or ſome ſuch thing, the whole Propoſition is true, and then they ſay a man may ſwear to that which is true, without danger of perjury: This is of no force, becauſe, though the whole propoſition be true, it is deceitfull, and contrary to that ſincerity which ought to be in an oath: And the end of an oath is hereby likewiſe defeated, which is to aſcertain the truth of what we ſay: But if a man reſerve ſomething in his mind which alters the truth of what he ſays, the thing is ſtill as doubtfull and uncertain as it was before. Beſides, if this be a good reaſon, a man may ſwear with reſervation in all caſes; becauſe the reaſon equally extends to all caſes; for if the truth of the propoſition, as made up of what is expreſs'd in words and reſerv'd in the mind, will excuſe a man from Perjury, then no man can be perjur'd that ſwears with reſervation: But this the *Caſuiſts* of the *Roman* Church do not allow, but only in ſome particular caſes, as *before an incompetent Judge*, or the like; for they ſee well enough that if this were allow'd in all caſes, it would deſtroy all Faith among men. And therefore ſince the reaſon extends alike to all caſes, it is plain that it is to be allow'd in none.

4thly. He is guilty of Perjury after the act, who having a real intention when he ſwears, to perform what he promiſeth, yet afterwards neglects to do it: Not for want of Power (for ſo long as that continues the obligation ceaſeth) but for want of Will, and due regard to his Oath.

Now that Perjury is a moſt heinous Sin, is evident, becauſe it is contrary to ſo plain and great a Law of God; one of the ten *Words* or *Precepts* of the Moral Law, *thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*; thou ſhalt not bring or apply the name of God to a falſhood: Or, as *Joſephus* renders it, *Thou ſhalt not adjure God to a falſe thing:* Which our Saviour renders yet more plainly, *Matth.* 5. 33. *Thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf.* For he ſeems to refer to the third Commandment when he ſays, *Ye have heard that it was ſaid to them of old time, thou ſhalt not forſwear thy ſelf*, as he had done before to the *6th* and *7th.* when he ſays, *It was ſaid to them of old time, thou ſhalt not kill, thou ſhalt not commit adultery.* So that the primary, if not the ſole intention of this Law, *Thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*, is to forbid the great ſin of Perjury. And I do not remember that in Scripture the phraſe of *taking God's name in vain*, is uſed in any other ſenſe. And thus it is certainly uſed, *Prov.* 30. 9. *Leſt I be poor and ſteal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain*, *i. e.* leſt Poverty ſhould tempt me to ſteal, and ſtealth ſhould engage me in Perjury. For among the *Jews* an oath was tendered to him that was ſuſpected of theft, as appears from *Levit.* 6. 2. where it is ſaid, *If any one be guilty of theft, and lyeth concerning it, or ſweareth falſly; he ſhall reſtore all that about which he hath ſworn falſly. Leſt I ſteal, and take the name of the Lord my God in vain*; that is, be perjured, being examined upon oath concerning a thing ſtoln. And for this reaſon the thief and the perjured perſon are put together, *Zech.* 5. 4.

where it is ſaid, that *a curſe ſhall enter into the houſe of the thief, and of him that ſweareth falſly by the name of God.* From all which it is very probable, that the whole intention of the *Third* Commandment is to forbid this great ſin of Perjury. To deter men from which, a ſevere threatning is there added; *for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain*; that is, he will moſt ſeverely puniſh ſuch a one. And 'tis very obſervable, that there is no threatning added to any other Commandment, but to *this* and the *ſecond*; Intimating to us that, next to Idolatry and the worſhip of a falſe God, Perjury is one of the greateſt affronts that can be offered to the divine Majeſty. This is one of thoſe ſins that cry ſo loud to Heaven, and quickens the pace of God's judgments, *Mal.* 3. 9. *I will come near to you in judgment, and be a ſwift witneſs againſt the ſwearer*: For this God threatens utter deſtruction to the man and his houſe, *Zech.* 5. 4. ſpeaking of the *curſe that goeth over the face of the whole earth*: *God* (ſays he) *will bring it forth, and it ſhall enter into the houſe of him that ſweareth falſly by the name of God, and ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall conſume it with the timber thereof and the ſtones thereof, It ſhall remain in the midſt of his houſe, and ſhall conſume it.* This ſin by the ſecret judgment of God undermines Eſtates and Families to the utter ruine of them. And among the *Heathen* it was always reckoned one of the greateſt of Crimes, and which they did believe God did not only puniſh upon the guilty perſon himſelf, but upon his family and poſterity; and many times upon whole Nations, as the *Prophet* alſo tells us, that *becauſe of Oaths the Land mourns.*

I need not uſe many words to aggravate this ſin; it is certainly a Crime of the higheſt nature. Deliberate Perjury being directly againſt a man's knowledge, ſo that no man can commit it without ſtaring his Conſcience in the face; which is one of the greateſt aggravations of any Crime. And it is equally a ſin againſt *both Tables*; being the higheſt affront to God, and of moſt injurious conſequence to men. It is an horrible abuſe of the name of God, an open contempt of his Judgment, and an inſolent defiance of his Vengeance: And in reſpect of men, it is not only a wrong to this or that particular perſon who ſuffers by it, but Treaſon againſt humane Society; ſubverting at once the foundations of publick Peace and Juſtice, and the private ſecurity of every man's life and fortune. It is a defeating of the beſt and laſt way that the wiſdom of men could deviſe for the deciſion of doubtful matters. *Solomon* very fully and elegantly expreſſeth the deſtructive nature of this ſin, *Prov.* 25. 18. *A falſe witneſs againſt his neighbour is a maul, and a ſword, and a ſharp arrow*: Intimating, that amongſt all the inſtruments of ruine and miſchief that have been deviſed by mankind, none is of more pernicious conſequence to humane Society than Perjury, and breach of Faith. It is a *peſtilence that* uſually *walketh in darkneſs*, and a ſecret ſtab and blow againſt which many times there is no poſſibility of defence.

And therefore it highly concerns thoſe who upon theſe and the like occaſions are called upon their Oath, whether as *Jurors* or *Witneſſes*, to ſet God before their eyes, and to have his fear in their hearts when-ever they come to take an oath. And to govern and diſcharge their conſciences in this matter by known and approv'd Rules, and by the Reſolutions of pious and wiſe men, and not by the looſe Reaſonings and Reſolutions of *Pamphlets*, ſent abroad to ſerve the turns of unpeaceable and ill-minded men (whether *Atheiſts*, or *Papiſts*, or others) on purpoſe to debauch the Conſciences of men by teaching them to play faſt and looſe with oaths. And it is a very ſad ſign of the decay of Chriſtian Religion among us, to ſee ſo many who call themſelves Chriſtians, to make ſo little conſcience of ſo great a ſin, as even the Light of Nature would bluſh and tremble at.

I will conclude all with thoſe excellent *Sayings* of the Son of *Sirach* concerning theſe two ſins (I have been ſpeaking of) prophane Swearing and Perjury, *Ec.* 23. 9, 10, &c. *Accuſtom not thy mouth to ſwearing; neither uſe thy ſelf to the naming of the holy One. A man that uſeth much ſwearing ſhall be filled with iniquity, and the plague ſhall never depart from his houſe. If he ſhall offend, his ſin ſhall be upon him; and if he acknowledge not his ſin, he maketh a double offence. And if he ſwear falſly he ſhall not be innocent, but his houſe ſhall be full of calamities.* And to repreſent to us the dreadful nature of this ſin of Perjury, *There is* (ſaith he) *a word that is cloathed about with death,* meaning a raſh and falſe Oath; *There is a word that is cloathed about with death, God grant it be not found in the heritage of Jacob: for all ſuch things ſhall be far from the godly; and they will not wallow in theſe ſins.* From which God preſerve all good men, and make them careful to preſerve themſelves; as they value the preſent peace of their own conſciences, and the favour of Almighty God in this world and the other, for his mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt, To whom,* &c.

A SER-

A

SERMON

Preached at the

FUNERAL

Of the Reverend

Mr. *THOMAS GOUGE*;

The *4th* of *November*, 1681.

At St. *Anne's Black-fryars*;

With a brief Account of his Life.

TO THE
Right Worſhipful the PRESIDENT,
The TREASURER,
And the reſt of the worthy Governors of the *Hoſpital* of *Chriſt-Church* in *LONDON*.

WHen upon the requeſt of ſome of the Relations and Friends of the Reverend Mr. Gouge *deceaſed, and, to ſpeak the truth, in compliance with mine own inclination to do right to the memory of ſo good a man, and to ſet ſo great an Example in the view of all men, I had determined to make this Diſcourſe publick; I knew not where more fitly to addreſs it than to your ſelves who are the living pattern of the ſame Vertue, and the faithfull diſpenſers and managers of one of the beſt and greateſt Charities in the world; eſpecially ſince he had a particular relation to you, and was pleaſed for ſome years laſt paſt, without any other conſideration but that of Charity, to employ his conſtant pains in Catechiſing the poor Children of your* Hoſpital*; wiſely conſidering of how great conſequence it was to this City, to have the foundations of Religion well laid in the tender years of ſo many perſons as were afterwards to be planted there in ſeveral Profeſſions; and from a true humility of mind, being ready to ſtoop to the meaneſt office and ſervice to do good.*

I have heard from an intimate friend of his that he would ſometimes with great pleaſure ſay, that he had two Livings *which he would not exchange for two of the greateſt in* England, *meaning* Wales *and* Chriſt's Hoſpital; *Contrary to common account he eſteemed every advantage of being uſeful and ſerviceable to God and men a rich* Benefice, *and thoſe his beſt* Patrons *and* Benefactors, *not who did him good, but who gave him the opportunity and means of doing it. To you therefore as his* Patrons *this Sermon doth of right belong, and to you I humbly dedicate it; heartily beſeeching Almighty God, to raiſe up many by his example that may* ſerve their generation according to the will of God, *as he did. I am*

Your Faithful and humble Servant,

Jo. Tillotſon.

SERMON

SERMON XXIII.

Preached at the Funeral of

Mr. *THOMAS GOUGE*:

With a ſhort Account of his Life.

LUKE xx. 37, 38.

Now that the dead are raiſed, even Moſes ſhewed at the buſh, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; For all live to him.

THE occaſion of theſe words of our bleſſed Saviour was an objection which the *Sadduces* made againſt the Reſurrection, grounded upon a caſe which had ſometimes happened among them, of a Woman that had had ſeven Brethren ſucceſſively to her Husbands. Upon which caſe they put this Queſtion to our Saviour; *whoſe wife of the ſeven ſhall this woman be at the Reſurrection?* That is, if men live in another world, how ſhall the controverſie between theſe ſeven Brethren be decided? for they all ſeem to have an equal claim to this Woman, each of them having had her to wife.

This captious Queſtion was not eaſie to be anſwered by the *Phariſees*, who fancied the enjoyments of the next life to be of the ſame kind with the ſenſual Pleaſures of this world, only greater and more durable. From which Tradition of the *Jews* concerning a ſenſual Paradiſe, *Mahomet* ſeems to have taken the pattern of his: as he did likewiſe many other things from the *Jewiſh* Traditions. Now upon this ſuppoſition, that in the next life there will be marrying and giving in marriage, it was a queſtion not eaſily ſatisfied, Whoſe wife of the ſeven this woman ſhould then be?

But our Saviour clearly avoids the whole force of it, by ſhewing the different ſtate of men in this world, and in the other. *The children of this world* (ſays he) *marry, and are given in marriage, but they who ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage.* And he does not barely and magiſterially aſſert this Doctrine, but gives a plain and ſubſtantial Reaſon for it; becauſe *they cannot dye any more.* After men have lived a while in this world they are taken away by death, and therefore marriage is neceſſary to maintain a ſucceſſion of mankind; but in the other world men ſhall become immortal and live for ever, and then the reaſon of marriage will wholly ceaſe: For when men can die no more there will then be no need of any new ſupplies of mankind.

Our Saviour having thus cleared himſelf of this Objection by taking away the ground and foundation of it, he produceth an Argument for the Proof of the reſurrection, in the words of my Text; *Now that the dead are raiſed, Moſes even ſhewed at the Buſh, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob.* That is, when in one of his Books God is brought in ſpeaking to him out of the Buſh, and calling himſelf by the title of the God of *Abraham*, the God of *Iſaac*, and the God of *Jacob*. From whence our Saviour infers the Reſurrection, becauſe *God is not the God of the dead but the living: For all live to him.*

My deſign from theſe words is, to ſhew the force and ſtrength of this Argument which our Saviour urgeth for the proof of the Reſurrection. In order whereunto I ſhall,

Firſt, Conſider it is an Argument *ad hominem*, and ſhew the fitneſs and force of it to convince thoſe with whom our Saviour diſputed.

Secondly, I ſhall enquire, Whether it be more than an Argument *ad hominem*. And if it be, wherein the real and abſolute force of it doth conſiſt?

And then I ſhall apply this Doctrine of the Reſurrection to the preſent Occaſion.

I. I. *Firſt*. We will conſider it is an Argument *ad hominem*, and ſhew the fitneſs and force of it to convince thoſe with whom our Saviour diſputed. And this will appear if we carefully conſider theſe *four* things.

1. What our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument.
2. The extraordinary veneration which the *Jews* in general had for the Writings of *Moſes*, above any other Books of the Old Teſtament.
3. The peculiar notion which the *Jews* had concerning the uſe of this Phraſe or expreſſion of *God's being any ones God.*
4. The great reſpect which the *Jews* had for theſe three Fathers of their Nation, *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*. For each of theſe make our Saviour's Argument more forcible againſt thoſe with whom he diſputed.

Firſt. We will conſider what our Saviour intended directly and immediately to prove by this Argument. And that was this, That there is another ſtate after this life, wherein men ſhall be happy or miſerable according as they have lived in this world. And this doth not only ſuppoſe the immortality of the Soul, but foraſmuch as the Body is an eſſential part of man, doth by conſequence infer the reſurrection of the Body; becauſe otherwiſe the *man* would not be happy or miſerable in the other world. But I cannot ſee any ſufficient ground to believe that our Saviour intended by this Argument directly and immediately to prove the reſurrection of the Body, but only by conſequence, and as it follows from the admiſſion of a future ſtate wherein men ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed. For that Reaſon of our Saviour, that *God is not a God of the dead but of the living*, if it did directly prove the reſurrection of the Body, it would prove that the Bodies of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* were raiſed to life again, at or before that time when God ſpake to *Moſes* and called himſelf the God of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*: But we do not believe this; and therefore ought not to ſuppoſe that it was the intention of our Saviour directly and immediately to prove the reſurrection of the Body, but only (as I ſaid before) a future ſtate. And that this was all our Saviour intended will more plainly appear, if we conſider what that Error of the *Sadduces* was which our Saviour here confutes. And *Joſephus*, who very well underſtood the difference of the Sects among the *Jews*, and gives a particular account of them, makes not the leaſt mention of any Controverſie between the *Phariſees* and the *Sadduces* about the reſurrection of the Body. All that he ſays, is this, That the *Phariſees* hold the Immortality of the Soul, and that there are Rewards and Puniſhments in another world: But the *Sadduces* denied all this, and that there was any other ſtate after this life. And this is the very ſame account with that which is given of them in the *New Teſtament*, *ver.* 27. of this *Ch. The Sadduces who deny that there is any reſurrection.* The meaning of which is more fully declared, *Act.* 23. 8. *The Sadduces ſay that there is no reſurrection, neither angel nor ſpirit; but the Phariſees confeſs both.* That is, the *Sadduces* denied that there was any other ſtate of men after this life, and that there was any ſuch thing as an immortal Spirit, either Angels, or the Souls of men ſurviving their Bodies. And, as Dr. *Hammond* hath judiciouſly obſerved, this is the true importance of the word ἀνάστασις, *viz* a *future* or *another ſtate*; unleſs in ſuch Texts where the Context does reſtrain it to the raiſing again of the Body, or where ſome word that denotes the *body*, as σώματος or σαρκὸς, is added to it.

Secondly. The force of this Argument againſt thoſe with whom our Saviour diſputed will further appear, if we conſider the great veneration which the *Jews* in general had for the Writings of *Moſes* above any other Books of the Old Teſtament; which they (eſpecially the *Sadduces*) looked upon only as Explications and Comments upon the Law of *Moſes*: But they eſteemed nothing as a neceſſary Article of Faith which had not ſome foundation in the Writings of *Moſes*. And this ſeems to me to be the true Reaſon why our Saviour choſe to confute them out of *Moſes*, rather than any other part of the Old Teſtament: And not as many learned men have imagined, becauſe the *Sadduces* did not receive any part of the Old Teſtament but only the *five* Books of *Moſes*; ſo that it was in vain to argue againſt them out of any other. This I know hath been a general opinion, grounded I think upon the miſtake of a paſſage in *Joſephus*, who ſays the *Sadduces only receive the written Law.* But if we carefully conſider that paſſage, we ſhall find that *Joſephus* doth not there oppoſe the Law to the *other Books* of the Old Teſtament, which were alſo *written*; but to *Oral Tradition.* For he ſays expreſly, that *the Sadduces only received the written Law, but the Phariſees, over and beſides what was written, received the Oral which they call Tradition.*

I deny not but that in the *later* Prophets there are more expreſs *Texts* for the proof of a future ſtate, than any are to be found in the Books of *Moſes*. As *Daniel* 12. 2. *And many of them that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake, ſome to everlaſting life, and ſome to ſhame and everlaſting contempt.* And indeed it ſeems very plain that holy men among the *Jews*, towards the expiration of the Legal diſpenſation, had ſtill clearer and more expreſs apprehenſions concerning a future ſtate than are to be met with in the Writings of *Moſes*, or of any of the *Prophets.*

The Law given by *Moſes* did ſuppoſe the *Immortality of the Souls of men*, and the *expectation of another life after this*, as Principles of Religion in ſome degree naturally known; but made no new and expreſs Revelation of theſe things. Nor was there any occaſion for it, the Law of *Moſes* being a Political Law, not intended for the Government of mankind, but of one particular Nation; and therefore was eſtabliſh'd, as Political Laws are, upon temporal promiſes and threatnings; promiſing temporal proſperity to the obſervation of its precepts, and threatning the breach of them with temporal judgments and calamities.

And this I take to be the true reaſon why arguments fetch'd from another world are ſo obſcurely inſiſted upon under that Diſpenſation; not but that another life after this was always ſuppos'd, and was undoubtedly the hope and expectation of good men under the Law, but the clear diſcovery of it was reſerv'd for the times of the *Meſſias.* And therefore as thoſe times drew on, and *the Son of righteouſneſs* was near his riſing, the ſhadows of the night began to be chaſed away, and mens apprehenſions of a future ſtate to clear up; ſo that in the time of the *Maccabees* good men ſpake with more confidence and aſſurance of theſe things.

It is likewiſe to be conſider'd, that the temporal calamities and ſufferings with which the *Jews* were almoſt continually haraſs'd from the time of their Captivity had very much wean'd good men from the conſideration of temporal promiſes, and awaken'd their minds to the more ſerious thoughts of another world. It being natural to men when they are deſtitute of preſent comfort, to ſupport themſelves with the expectation of better things for the future, and as the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* expreſſeth it, *ch.* 6. *v.* 18. *To fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope that is before them*, and to employ their reaſon to fortifie themſelves as well as they can in that perſwaſion.

And this I doubt not was the true occaſion of thoſe clearer and riper apprehenſions of good men concerning a future ſtate, in thoſe times of diſtreſs and perſecution: it being very agreeable to the wiſdom and goodneſs of the Divine Providence not to leave his People deſtitute of ſufficient ſupport under great trials and ſufferings: And nothing but the hopes of a better life could have born up the ſpirits of men under ſuch cruel tortures. And of this we have a moſt remarkable Inſtance in the Hiſtory of the *ſeven Brethren* in the *Maccabees*, who being cruelly tortured and put to death by *Antiochus*, do moſt expreſly declare their confident expectation of a reſurrection to a better life. To which Hiſtory the *Apoſtle* certainly refers, *Heb.* 11. 35. when he ſays, *Others were tortured, not excepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection:* where the word, which we render *were tortur'd*, is ἐτυμπανίσθησαν, which is the very word uſed in the *Maccabees* to expreſs the particular kind of torture us'd upon them; beſides that being *offer'd deliverance* they moſt reſolutely *refus'd* to *accept* of it, with this expreſs declaration that they hop'd for a *reſurrection* to a *better* life.

But to return to my purpoſe, notwithſtanding there might be more clear and expreſs *Texts* to this purpoſe in the ancient *Prophets*, yet our Saviour knowing how great a regard not only the *Sadduces*, but all the *Jews* had to the Authority of *Moſes*, he thought fit to bring his proof of the reſurrection out of his Writings, as that which was the moſt likely to convince them.

Thirdly. If we conſider further the peculiar Notion which the *Jews* had concerning the uſe of this phraſe or expreſſion of *God's being any ones God.* And that was this. That God is no where in Scripture ſaid to be any ones God while he was alive. And therefore they tell us that while *Iſaac* lived, God is not called the God of *Iſaac*, but the *fear of Iſaac.* As *Gen.* 31. 42. *Except the God of Abraham, and the fear of Iſaac had been with me*; and *ver.* 53. when *Laban* made a covenant with *Jacob*, 'tis ſaid that *Laban did ſwear by the God of Abraham, and the God of Nahor, and the God of their Fathers*, but *Jacob* ſwore *by the fear of his Father Iſaac.* I will not warrant this Obſervation to be good, becauſe I certainly know it is not true. For God doth expreſly call himſelf the God of *Iſaac*, while *Iſaac* was yet alive, *Gen.* 28.13. *I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Iſaac.* It is ſufficient to my purpoſe, that this was a Notion anciently currant among the *Jews*. And therefore our Saviour's Argument from this expreſſion muſt be ſo much the ſtronger againſt *them*: For if the Souls of men be extinguiſhed by death (as the *Sadduces* believed) what did it ſignifie to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* to have God called *their God*, after they were dead? But ſurely for God to be any ones God doth ſignifie ſome great benefit and advantage; which yet (according to the notion which the *Jews* had of this Phraſe) could not reſpect this life, becauſe, according to *them*, God is not ſaid to be any ones God till after he is dead: But it is thus ſaid of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* after their death, and therefore our Saviour infers very ſtrongly againſt *them*, that *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* were not extinguiſhed by death, but do ſtill live ſomewhere: for *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.* And then he adds by way of further explication, *for all live to him.* That is, though thoſe good men who are departed this life, do not ſtill live *to us*, here in this world, yet *they live to God*, and are with him.

Fourthly. If we conſider the great reſpect which the *Jews* had for thoſe three Fathers of their Nation, *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*. They had an extraordinary opinion of them, and eſteemed nothing too great to be thought or ſaid of them. And therefore we find that they looked upon it as a great arrogance for any man to aſſume any thing to himſelf that might ſeem to ſet him above *Abraham*, *Iſaac* or *Jacob*. With what indignation did they fly upon our Saviour on this account? *Joh.* 4. 12. *Art thou greater than our father Jacob?* and *chap.* 8. *verſ.*53. *Art thou greater than our father Abraham? whom makeſt thou thy ſelf?* Now they who had ſo ſuperſtitious a veneration for them, would eaſily believe any thing of privilege to belong to them: ſo that our Saviour doth with great advantage inſtance in them, in favour of whom they would be inclined to extend the meaning of any promiſe to the utmoſt, and allow it to ſignifie as much as the words could poſſibly bear. So that it is no wonder that the *Text* tells us that this Argument put the *Sadduces* to ſilence. They durſt not attempt a thing ſo odious, as to go about to take away any thing of privilege from *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*.

And thus I have, as briefly as the matter would bear, endeavoured to ſhew the fitneſs and force of this Argument to convince thoſe with whom our Saviour diſputed. I come now, to the

II. *Second* place, to inquire, Whether this be any more than an argument *ad hominem*; And if it be, wherein the real and abſolute force of it doth conſiſt? II.

I do not think it neceſſary to believe that every Argument uſed by our Saviour or his Apoſtles, is abſolutely and in it ſelf concluſive of the matter in debate. For an Argument which doth not really prove the thing in Queſtion, may yet be a very good Argument *ad hominem*; and in ſome caſes more convincing to him with whom we diſpute than that which is a better Argument in it ſelf. Now it is poſſible, that our Saviour's intention might not be to bring a concluſive proof of the Reſurrection, but only to confute thoſe who would needs be diſputing with him. And to that purpoſe an Argument *ad hominem*, which proceeded upon grounds which they themſelves could not deny, might be very proper and effectual.

But although it be not neceſſary to believe, that this was more than an Argument *ad hominem*; yet it is the better to us, if it be abſolutely and in it ſelf concluſive of the thing in Queſtion. And this I hope will ſufficiently appear, if we conſider theſe *four* things.

1. That for God to be *any ones God* doth ſignifie ſome very extraordinary bleſſing and happineſs to thoſe perſons of whom this is ſaid.

2. If we conſider the eminent faith and obedience of the perſons to whom this promiſe is made.

3. Their condition in this world.

4. The general importance of this promiſe abſtracting from the perſons particularly ſpecified and named in it, *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*.

Firſt, If we conſider that for God to be *any ones God* doth ſignifie ſome very and extraordinary bleſſing and happineſs to thoſe perſons of whom this is ſaid. It is a big word for God to declare himſelf to be *any ones God*: and the leaſt we can imagine to be meant by it, is that God will in an extraordinary manner employ his power and wiſdom to do him good: that he will concern himſelf more for the happineſs of thoſe whoſe God he declares himſelf to be, than for others.

Secondly, If we conſider the eminent faith and obedience of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*. *Abraham* left his Countrey in obedience to God, not knowing whither he was to go. And which was one of the moſt unparallel'd and ſtrange inſtances of faith and obedience that can almoſt be imagined, he was willing to have ſacrificed his only Son at the command of God. *Iſaac* and *Jacob* were alſo very good men, and devout worſhippers of the true God, when almoſt the whole world was ſunk into Idolatry and all manner of impiety. Now what can we imagine, but that the good God did deſign ſome extraordinary reward to ſuch faithfull ſervants of his? eſpecially if we conſider, that he intended this gracious declaration of his concerning them, for a ſtanding encouragement to all thoſe who in after Ages ſhould follow the faith and tread in the ſteps of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*.

Thirdly. If we conſider the condition of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob* in this world. The Scripture tells us, that *they were pilgrims and ſtrangers upon the earth*; had no fixed and ſetled habitation, but were forced to wander from one Kingdom and Country to another; that they were expoſed to many hazards and difficulties, to great troubles and afflictions in this world; ſo that there was no ſuch peculiar happineſs befell them in this life above the common rate of men, as may ſeem to fill up the big words of this promiſe, that *God would be their God*. For ſo far as the Scripture Hiſtory informs us, and further we cannot know of this matter, *Eſau* was as proſperous as *Jacob*; and *Jacob* had a great many more troubles and afflictions in this life than *Eſau* had. But ſurely when God calls himſelf *the God of Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, this ſignifies that God intended ſome very peculiar bleſſing and advantage to them above others: which ſeeing they did not enjoy in this world, it is very reaſonable to believe that one time or other this gracious declaration and promiſe of God, was made good to them.

And therefore the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*, *chap.* 11. from this very expreſſion of *God's* being ſaid *to be the God of Abraham* and others, argues that ſome extraordinary happineſs was reſerved for them in another world: and that upon this very ground I am now ſpeaking of, namely, becauſe condition of *Abraham* and ſome others, was not ſuch in this world as might ſeem to anſwer the fulneſs of this promiſe. *All theſe*, ſays he, *died in the faith, not having received the promiſes, but having ſeen them afar off, and were perſwaded of them, and embraced them, and confeſſed that they were ſtrangers and pilgrims upon the earth.* From whence he reaſons very ſtrongly, that theſe good men might reaſonably expect ſomething better than any thing that had befallen them in this World. For *they*, ſays he, *that ſay ſuch things, declare plainly that they ſeek a Country*; which at the 16. *verſe* he calls *a better Country, that is a heavenly. They that ſay ſuch things*: that is, they who acknowledge themſelves to be ſtrangers and pilgrims in the earth, and yet pretend that God had promiſed *to be their God*, declare plainly that they expect ſome reward beyond this life. From all which he concludes, *Wherefore God is not aſhamed to be called their God, becauſe he hath prepared for them a City*, Intimating that if no happineſs had remained for theſe good men in another world, this promiſe of God's *being their God*, would ſhamefully have fallen ſhort of what it ſeemed to import, *viz.* ſome extraordinary reward and bleſſing worthy of God to beſtow; ſomething more certain and laſting than any of the enjoyments of this world; which ſince God hath abundantly performed to them in the happineſs of another life, his promiſe to them was made good to the full, and he needed not *be aſhamed to be called their God.* But if nothing beyond this life had been reſerved for them, that Saying of old *Jacob* towards the concluſion of his life, *few and evil have the days of the years of my life been*, would have been an eternal reflection upon the truth and faithfulneſs of him who had ſo often called himſelf the God of *Jacob.*

But now, becauſe to all this it may be ſaid, that this Promiſe ſeems to have been made good to *Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob*, in this world: For was not God the God of *Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob*, when he took ſuch a particular and extraordinary care of them, and protected them from the manifold dangers they were expoſed to by ſuch a ſpecial and immediate providence, *ſuffering no one to do them harm, but rebuking even Kings for their ſakes?* Was not he *Abraham*'s God, when he bleſt him ſo miraculouſly with a Son in his old Age, and with ſo conſiderable an eſtate to leave to him? Was not that ſaying of *Jacob* a great acknowledgement of the gracious providence God towards him, *With my ſtaff paſſed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands?* And though it muſt needs be a very cutting affliction to him to loſe his Son *Joſeph*, as he thought he had done, yet that was more than recompenced to him in *Joſeph's* ſtrange advancement in *Egypt*, whereby God put into his hands the opportunity of ſaving his Father and his whole Family alive. And was not God *the God of Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob*, in making them Fathers of ſo numerous an off-ſpring, as afterwards became a *great nation*: and in giving them a fruitful Land; and bringing them to the quiet poſſeſſion of it by ſuch a *ſeries* of wonderful Miracles? what need then is there of extending this promiſe to another world? doth it not ſeem abundantly made good in thoſe great bleſſings which God beſtowed upon them whilſt they liv'd, and afterwards upon their poſterity, in this world? And does not this agree well enough with the firſt and moſt obvious ſence of theſe words, *I am the God of Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob*; that is, I am he that was their

God while they were alive, and am ſtill the God of their poſterity for their ſakes; I ſay, becauſe the *three* former Conſiderations are liable to this Objection, which ſeems wholly to take off the force of this Argument; therefore for the full clearing of this matter, I will add one conſideration more.

Fourthly then, we will conſider the general importance of this Promiſe, abſtracting from the particular perſons ſpecified and named in it, *viz. Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob*; and that is, that God will make a wide and plain difference between good and bad men; he will be *ſo* the God of good men as he is not of the wicked: and ſome time or other put every good man into a better and happier condition than any wicked man: ſo that the general importance of this promiſe is finally reſolved into the equity and juſtice of the Divine Providence.

And unleſs we ſuppoſe another life after this, it will certainly be very hard, and I think impoſſible, to reconcile the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, and the common appearances of things in this World, with the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God's Providence.

It cannot be denied, but that *Abraham, Iſaac,* and *Jacob,* and ſeveral good men in the Old Teſtament, had many ſignal Teſtimonies of the Divine favour vouchſafed to them in this world: But we read likewiſe of ſeveral wicked men that had as large a ſhare of temporal bleſſings. It is very true that *Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob,* had great eſtates, and were petty Princes: But *Pharoah* was a mighty Prince in compariſon of them; and the Kingdom of *Egypt,* which probably was the firſt and chief ſeat of Idolatry, was at the ſame time one of the moſt potent and flouriſhing Kingdoms in the world: and was bleſt with a prodigious plenty, whereby they were furniſhed with ſtore of corn when good *Jacob* and his Family had like to have periſhed by famine. 'Tis true, *Joſeph* was advanc'd to great power in *Egypt,* and thereby had the opportunity of ſaving his Father's houſe, by ſetling them and feeding them in *Egypt*: But then it is to be conſidered again, that this coſt them very dear, and their coming thither was the occaſion of a long and cruel bondage to *Jacob's* poſterity, ſo that we ſee that theſe good men had no ſuch bleſſings, but what were common with them to many others that were Wicked: and the bleſſings which God beſtowed upon them, had great abatements by the intermixture of many and ſore afflictions.

It ſeems then upon the whole matter, to be very plain, that the Providences of God in this world towards good men are ſo contrived, that it may ſufficiently appear, to thoſe who wiſely conſider the works of God, that they are not neglected by him; and yet that theſe outward bleſſings are ſo promiſcuouſly diſpenſed, that no man can certainly be concluded to be a good man from any happineſs he enjoys in this life; And the proſperity of good men is uſually on purpoſe ſo ſhadowed and mixed with afflictions, as may juſtly raiſe their hopes, to the expectation of a more perfect happineſs and better reward than any they meet with in this world.

And if ſo, then the general importance of this Promiſe, that *God will be the God* of good men, muſt neceſſarily ſignifie ſomething beyond this world: Becauſe in this world there is not that clear difference univerſally made between good and bad men which the Juſtice of the Divine Providence doth require, and which ſeems to be intended, in the general ſence of this Promiſe. For if this Promiſe (though perſonally made to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*) be intended, as the Scripture tells us it was for a ſtanding encouragement to good men in all Ages, then it muſt contain in it this general Truth, *that God will ſome time or other plentifully reward every good man*; that is, he will do ſomething far better for him than for any wicked man: But if there be no life after this, it is impoſſible to reconcile this ſenſe of it with the courſe of God's Providence, and with the Hiſtory of the Bible.

And to make this out fully and at once, I will only produce that ſingle Inſtance of *Abel* and *Cain*. *Abel* offered to God *a more excellent ſacrifice than Cain*, and he *had this teſtimony, that he pleaſed God*; which was in effect to declare, that *God was the God of Abel* and not of *Cain*; ſo that by virtue of the general importance of this Promiſe, it might juſtly be expected that *Abel's* condition ſhould have been much better than *Cain*'s: But if there be no happineſs after this life, *Abel's* was evidently much worſe. For upon this very account, that *he pleaſed God better*, he was killed by *Cain*, who had offered to God a ſlight and contemptuous offering. And *Cain* lived a long time after, and grew great, and *built Cities*. Now ſuppoſing there were no other life after this, this muſt have been a moſt horrible Example to all Ages, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, and have made men for ever afraid to pleaſe God upon ſuch hard terms; when they were ſure of no other reward for ſo doing, but to be oppreſs'd and ſlain by the hands of the wicked. So that if this were really the Caſe, it would puzzle all the Wit and Reaſon of mankind to vindicate the equity and juſtice of the Divine Providence, and to reſcue it out of the hands of this terrible Objection.

And thus have I as briefly as I could, endeavoured to clear to you the force of this Argument uſed by our Saviour for the proof of the Reſurrection. And have the longer inſiſted upon it, becauſe at firſt appearance it ſeems to be but a very obſcure and remote Argument: And yet ſo much the more neceſſary to be clear'd, becauſe this in all probability was that very *Text* upon which the *Jews* in our Saviour's time grounded their belief of a future ſtate, in oppoſition to the error of the *Sadduces*; and which they call'd by way of eminency *the promiſe made of God unto the Fathers*. As will plainly appear, if we conſider what St. *Paul* ſays to this purpoſe; when he appeals ſo often to the *Phariſees* for his agreement with them in this Article of the Reſurrection, and likewiſe in the ground of it from *the promiſe made of God unto the fathers*. Acts 24. 14, 15. *But this I confeſs unto thee, that after the way which they call hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets; and have hope towards God, which they themſelves alſo allow, that there ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead.* From whence it is clear, that they both grounded their hope of the reſurrection upon ſomething *written in the Law and the Prophets*: and what that was, he expreſſeth more particular, *c.* 26. *v.* 6, 7. *And now I ſtand, and am judged for the hope of the promiſe made of God unto our Fathers; unto which promiſe our twelve Tribes, inſtantly ſerving God day and night, hope to come. By the promiſe made of God unto the Fathers*, he means ſome promiſe made by God to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*; for ſo St. *Luke* more than once, in his Hiſtory of the *Acts*, explains this phraſe *of the God of their Fathers*, Acts 3. 13.

The God of Abraham, and of Iſaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers; and *c.* 7. *v.* 32. *I am the God of thy Fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Iſaac, and the God of Jacob.* Now what was the great and famous Promiſe which God made to *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*? was it not this of being *their God*? So that it was this very promiſe upon which St. *Paul* tells us the *Jews* grounded their hope of a future ſtate, becauſe they underſtood it neceſſarily to ſignifie ſome bleſſing and happineſs beyond this life.

And now having, I hope, ſufficiently clear'd this matter, I ſhall make ſome improvement of this Doctrine of a future ſtate, and that to theſe three purpoſes.

1. To raiſe our minds above this world and the enjoyments of this preſent life. Were but men throughly convinced of this plain and certain Truth, that there is a vaſt difference between Time and Eternity, between a few years and everlaſting Ages: would we but repreſent to our ſelves what thoughts and apprehenſions dying perſons have of this world; how vain and empty a thing it appears to them, how like a pageant and a ſhadow it looks as it paſſeth away from them, methinks none of thoſe things could be a ſufficient temptation to any man to forget God and his Soul; but notwithſtanding all the delights and pleaſures of ſenſe, we ſhould be ſtrangely intent upon the concernments of another world, and almoſt wholly taken up, with the thoughts of that vaſt Eternity which we are ready to launch into. For what is there in this world, this *waste and howling wilderneſs*, this rude and barbarous Country which we are but to paſs through, which ſhould detain our affections here, and take off our thoughts from our everlaſting habitation; from that better and that *heavenly Country*, where we hope to live and be happy for ever?

If we ſettle our affections upon the enjoyments of this preſent Life, ſo as to be extreamly pleas'd and tranſported with them, and to ſay in our hearts, *It is good for us to be here*; if we be exceſſively griev'd or diſcontented for the want or loſs of them, and if we look upon our preſent ſtate in this world any otherwiſe than as a preparation and paſſage to a better life, it is a ſign that our faith and hope of the happineſs of another life is but very weak and faint, and that we do not heartily and in good earneſt believe what we pretend to do concerning theſe things. For did we ſtedfaſtly believe and were throughly perſwaded of what our Religion ſo plainly declares to us concerning the unſpeakable and endleſs happineſs of good men in another world, our affections would ſit more looſe to this world, and our hopes would raiſe our hearts as much above theſe preſent and ſenſible things *as the heavens are high above the earth*; we ſhould value nothing here below, but as it ſerves for our preſent ſupport and paſſage, or may be made a means to ſecure and encreaſe our future felicity.

2. The conſideration of another Life ſhould quicken our preparation for that bleſſed ſtate which remains for us in the other world. This Life is a ſtate of probation and trial. This world is God's ſchool, where immortal ſpirits clothed with fleſh are trained and bred up for eternity. And then certainly it is not an indifferent thing and a matter of ſlight concernment to us, how we live and demean our ſelves in this world; whether we indulge our ſelves in *ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, or *live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly* in this preſent world: No; it is a matter of infinite

moment, as much as our Souls and all eternity are worth. Let us not deceive our ſelves; *for as we ſow ſo ſhall we reap: If we ſow to the fleſh, we ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption; but if we ſow to the ſpirit, we ſhall of the ſpirit reap everlaſting life. Light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſs for the upright in heart. The Righteous hath hopes in his death. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

But the ungodly are not ſo: whoever hath lived a wicked and vicious life, feels ſtrange throws and pangs in his conſcience when he comes to be caſt upon a ſick bed. *The wicked is like the troubled ſea* (ſaith the *Prophet*) *when it cannot reſt*; full of trouble and confuſion, eſpecially in a dying hour. It is death to ſuch a man to look back upon his life, and a hell to him to think of eternity. When his guilty and trembling Soul is ready to leave his Body, and juſt ſtepping into the other world, what horrour and amazement do then ſeize upon him? what a rage doth ſuch a man feel in his breaſt, when he ſeriouſly conſiders, that he hath been ſo great a fool as for the falſe and imperfect pleaſure of a few days to make himſelf miſerable for ever?

3. Let the conſideration of that unſpeakable Reward which God hath promiſed to good men at the Reſurrection, encourage us to obedience and a holy life. We ſerve a great Prince who is able to promote us to honour; a moſt gracious Maſter who will not let the leaſt ſervice we do for him paſs unrewarded. This is the inference which the Apoſtle makes from this large diſcourſe of the Doctrine of the Reſurrection, 1 *Cor.* 15. 58. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt and immoveable, always abounding in the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* Nothing will make death more welcome to us than a conſtant courſe of ſervice and obedience to God. *Sleep,* ſaith *Solomon, is ſweet to the labouring man*: ſo after a great diligence and induſtry in *working out our own ſalvation,* and (as it is ſaid of *David*) *ſerving our generation according to the will of God,* how pleaſant will it be to fall aſleep? And as an uſeful and well-ſpent life will make our death to be ſweet, ſo our reſurrection to be glorious. Whatever acts of Piety we do to God, or of charity to men; whatever we lay out upon the poor and afflicted and neceſſitous, will all be conſidered by God in the day of recompences, and moſt plentifully rewarded to us.

And ſurely no conſideration ought to be more prevalent to perſwade us to alms-deeds and charity to the poor, than that of a Reſurrection to another life. Beſides the promiſes of this life which are made to works of charity, and there is not any grace or vertue whatſoever, which hath ſo many and ſo great promiſes of temporal bleſſings made to it in Scripture as this grace of Charity; I ſay, beſides the promiſes of this Life, the great promiſe of eternal Life is in Scripture in a more eſpecial manner entail'd upon it. *Luke* 12. 33. *Give alms,* ſaith our Saviour, *provide your ſelves bags which wax not old, a treaſure in the heavens that faileth not*; and *c.* 9. *v.* 19. *make to your ſelves friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when ye ſhall fail they may receive you into everlaſting habitations.* And 1 *Tim.* 6. 17, 18, 19. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded,* &c. *that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life*; *the word* θεμέλιον, which our Tranſlation renders *foundation* according to the common uſe of it, ſeems in this place to have a more peculiar Notion, and to ſignifie the *ſecurity* that is given by a *pledge*, or by an *inſtrument* or obligation of *contract* for the performance of *Covenants.* For beſides that the phraſe of *laying up in ſtore, or treaſuring up a foundation*, ſeems to be a very odd jumbling of metaphors; this very word θεμέλιος almoſt neceſſarily requires this notion as it is uſed by the ſame *Apoſtle*, in his ſecond *Epiſtle* to *Timothy*, chap. 2. v. 19. where it is ſaid, *the foundation of God ſtands ſure, having this ſeal*, &c. a *ſeal* being very improper *to ſtrengthen a foundation*, but very fit *to confirm a Covenant.* And then ſurely it ought to be render'd, *the Covenant of God remains firm, having this ſeal.* And ſo likewiſe in the forementiond Text, the ſence will be much more eaſie and current if we render it thus, *treaſuring up, or providing for themſelves a good ſecurity* or *pledge againſt the time to come*; I add *pledge*, becauſe that anciently was the common way of ſecurity for things lent: beſides that the Apoſtle ſeems plainly to allude to that paſſage, *Tobit* 4.8, 9. *If thou haſt abundance, give alms accordingly*, &c. *for thou layeſt up a good treaſure for thy ſelf againſt the day of neceſſity*, θέμα γὰρ ἀγαθὸν θησαυρίζεις, *for thou treaſureſt up for thy ſelf a good Pledge*; to which this of the Apoſtle exactly anſwers, ἀποθησαυρίζοντας ἑαυτοῖς θεμέλιον καλὸν, *treaſuring up, or providing for themſelves a good pledge or ſecurity*, &c. the ſence however is plain, that the charity of Alms is one of the beſt ways of ſecuring our future happineſs.

And yet further to encourage us to abound in works of charity, the Scripture tells us, that proportionably to the degrees of our charity ſhall be the degrees of our reward; upon this conſideration the *Apoſtle* exhorts the *Corinthians* to be liberal in their Charity, 2 *Cor.* 9.6. *he that ſoweth ſparingly ſhall reap ſparingly, but he that ſoweth bountifully ſhall reap bountifully.* So that whatever we lay out in this kind is to the *greateſt advantage*, and upon the *beſt ſecurity*; two conſiderations which uſe to be very prevalent with rich men to lay out their money.

We certainly do it to the *greateſt advantage*; becauſe God will conſider the very ſmalleſt thing that any of us do in this kind. He that ſhall *give* ſo much as *a cup of cold water to a diſciple, in the name of a diſciple, ſhall not loſe his reward*; theſe laſt words *ſhall not loſe his reward*, are a μείωσις, and ſignifie much more than they ſeem to ſpeak, *viz.* that he ſhall have a very great reward, infinitely beyond the value of what he hath done.

And we do it likewiſe upon the *beſt ſecurity*; ſo *Solomon* aſſures us, *Prov.* 19. 17. *He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given he will pay him again*: and we may be confident of our ſecurity where God is ſurety; nay, he tells us that in this caſe he looks upon himſelf as principal, and that whatever we do in ways of mercy and charity to the poor he takes as done to himſelf. So our Lord hath told us, *Matth.* 25. 40. and we ſhall hear the ſame from him again out of his own mouth when he ſhall appear in his Majeſty to judge the world, *Then the King ſhall anſwer and ſay unto them, Verily I ſay unto you, inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

And on the other ſide, the Scripture no where paſſeth a more ſevere doom upon any ſort of perſons, than upon thoſe who have no bowells of compaſſion towards their brethren in diſtreſs. That is a fearfull ſentence indeed, which the Apoſtle pronounceth upon ſuch perſons, *James* 2. 13. *He ſhall have judgment without mercy that hath ſhewed no mercy.* And this our Saviour repreſents to us in a moſt ſolemn manner, in that lively deſcription which he makes of the Judgment of the great day, *Matt.* 25. 31. &c. *When the Son of man ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy Angels with him, then ſhall he ſit upon the throne of his glory: and before him ſhall be gathered all* *nations, and he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, as a ſhepherd divideth the ſheep from the goats. And he ſhall ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then ſhall the King ſay unto them on his right hand, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, before the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink; I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was ſick, and ye viſited me; I was in priſon, and ye came unto me. Then ſhall He ſay, alſo unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat,* &c. *And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment; but the righteous into life eternal.* And if this be, as moſt certainly it is, a true and proper repreſentation of the proceſs of that Day, then the great matter of enquiry will be, What works of charity and mercy have been done or neglected by us, and accordingly a Sentence of eternal happineſs, or miſery, will be paſs'd upon us: I was hungry, did ye feed me or did ye not? I was naked, did ye clothe me or did ye not? I was ſick and in priſon, did ye viſit me or did ye not? Not but that all the good or evil of our lives, in what kind ſoever, ſhall then be brought to account; But that our Saviour did chuſe to inſtance particularly, and only in things of this nature, ſhould methinks make a mighty impreſſion upon us, and be a powerful conſideration to oblige us to have a very peculiar regard to works of mercy and charity, and to make ſure to *abound in this Grace*; that when we ſhall appear before the great Judge of the world we may find that mercy from Him which we have ſhew'd to others, and which we ſhall all undoubtedly ſtand in need of *in that Day.*

And among all our acts of charity, thoſe which are done upon leaſt probability and foreſight of their meeting with any recompence in this world, either by way of real requital or of fame and reputation, as they are of all other moſt acceptable to God, ſo they will certainly have the moſt ample reward in another world. So our Lord hath aſſured us, and accordingly adviſeth us, *Luke* 14. 12, 13, 14. *When thou makeſt a feaſt, invite not the rich, becauſe they will recompenſe thee again: but call the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind, for they cannot recompence thee, but thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt.* If we be Religious for worldly ends and ſerve God, and do good to men, onely in contemplation of ſome temporal advantage, we take up with preſent payment, and cut our ſelves ſhort of our future reward: of ſuch, ſaith our Lord, *Verily I ſay unto you, they have their reward*: they are their own ſecurity, and have taken care to to ſatisfy themſelves, and therefore are to expect nothing from God. But let us who call our ſelves Chriſtians do ſomething for God, for which we have no hopes to be recompenſed in this world; that we may ſhew that we truſt God and take his word, and dare venture upon the ſecurity of the next world, and that *recompence* which ſhall be made *at the reſurrection of the juſt.*

And how great and glorious that ſhall be, our Saviour tells us immediately before my *Text. They that ſhall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the reſurrection from the dead, they can die no more, but they are equal to the Angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the Reſurrection.* If then we be heirs of ſuch glorious hopes, and believe that he who is *the God of Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob,* will alſo be our God: let us live as it becomes the Candidates of heaven, and the *children of the Reſurrection,* and ſuch as verily believe another life after this, and hope one day to *ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac* and *Jacob, in the Kingdom of God.*

And now that I have repreſented to you what encouragement there is to well-doing, and particularly to works of Charity, from the conſideration of the bleſſed reward we ſhall certainly meet with at the reſurrection of the juſt; I ſhall crave your patience a little longer, whilſt I propoſe to you one of the faireſt Examples of this kind which either this or perhaps any other Age could eaſily preſent us withal: I mean our deceaſed Brother to whom we are now paying our laſt ſolemn reſpects, the Reverend Mr. *THOMAS GOUGE*; the worthy Son of a reverend and learned Divine of this City, Dr. *William Gouge*; who was Miniſter of this Pariſh of *Black Friars* ſix and forty years; he dyed in 1653. and ſtill lives in the memory of many here preſent.

I muſt confeſs that I am no friend to Funeral *Panegyricks*, where there is nothing of extraordinary worth and merit in the party commended to give occaſion and foundation for them: In ſuch caſes, as praiſes are not due to the dead, ſo they may be of ill conſequence to the living: not only by bringing thoſe of our profeſſion that make a practice of it, under the ſuſpicion of officious and mercenary flattery, but likewiſe by encouraging men to hope that they alſo may be well ſpoken of, and even Sainted when they are dead, though they ſhould have done little or no good in their life: But yet on the other hand, to commend thoſe excellent Perſons the vertues of whoſe lives have been bright and exemplary, is not only a piece of juſtice due to the dead, but an Act of great charity to the living, ſetting a pattern of well-doing before our eyes, very apt and powerful to incite and encourage us *to go and do likewiſe*.

Upon both theſe Conſiderations, firſt to do right to the memory of ſo good a man, and then in hopes that the example may prove fruitful and have a conſiderable effect upon others to beget the like goodneſs and charity in them, I ſhall endeavour, in as narrow a compaſs as may be, to give you the juſt character of this truly pious and charitable Man, and by ſetting his life in a true light to recommend with all the advantage I can ſo excellent a pattern to your imitation.

He was born at *Bow* near *Stratford* in the County of *Middleſex* the 19th. day of *September* 1605. He was bred at *Eaton* School, and from thence choſen to *King*'s College in *Cambridge* being about 20 years of Age, in the year 1626. After he had finiſh'd the courſe of his ſtudies, and taken his Degrees, he left the *Univerſity* and his *Fellowſhip*, being preſented to the living of *Colſden* near *Croyden* in *Surrey*, where he continued about two or three years; and from thence was remov'd to S. *Sepulchres* in *London*, in the 1638. and the year after thinking fit to change his condition match'd into a very worthy and ancient Family, marrying one of the Daughters of Sir *Robert Darcy*.

Being thus ſettled in this large and populous *Pariſh*, he did with great ſolicitude and pains diſcharge all the parts of a vigilant and faithfull Miniſter, for about the ſpace of 24 years. For beſides his conſtant and weekly labour of preaching, he was very diligent and charitable in viſiting the ſick, and miniſtring not only ſpiritual counſel and comfort to them, but likewiſe liberal relief to the wants and neceſſities of thoſe that were poor and deſtitute of means to help themſelves, in that condition. He did alſo every morning throughout the year Catechiſe in the Church, eſpecially the poorer ſort who were generally moſt ignorant; and to encourage them to come thither to be inſtructed by him, he did once a week diſtribute money among them, not upon a certain day, but changing it on purpoſe as he thought good, that he might thereby oblige them to be conſtantly preſent; Theſe were chiefly the more aged poor, who being paſt labour had leaſure enough to attend upon this exerciſe. As for the other ſort of poor who were able to work for their living, he ſet them at work upon his own charge, buying Flax and Hemp for them to ſpin, and what they ſpun he took off their hands, paying them for their work, and then got it wrought into Cloth, and ſold it as he could, chiefly among his friends, himſelf bearing the whole loſs. And this was a very wiſe and well choſen way of charity, and in the good effect of it a much greater charity than if he had given theſe very perſons freely and for nothing ſo much as they earned by their work; becauſe by this means he took many off from begging, and thereby, reſcued them at once from two of the moſt dangerous temptations of this world, *Idleneſs* and *Poverty*; and by degrees reclaim'd them to a vertuous and induſtrious courſe of life, which enabled them afterwards to live without being beholden to the charity of others.

And this courſe ſo happily deviſ'd and begun by Mr. *Gouge* in his own Pariſh was I think that which gave the firſt hint to that worthy and uſeful Citizen Mr. *Thomas Firmin* of a much larger deſign, which hath been proſecuted by him for ſome years with that vigour and good ſucceſs in this City, that many hundreds of poor Children, and others who liv'd idle before, unprofitable both to themſelves and the publick, are continually maintain'd at work and taught to earn their own livelihood much in the ſame way: He being, by the generous aſſiſtance and charity of many worthy and well-diſpos'd Perſons of all ranks, enabled to bear the unavoidable loſs and charge of ſo vaſt an undertaking; and by his own forward inclination to charity, and his unwearied diligence and activity, extraordinarily fitted to ſuſtain and go through the incredible pains of it.

But to return to our deceaſed Friend; concerning whom I muſt content my ſelf to paſs over many things worthy to be remembred of him, and to ſpeak only of thoſe Vertues of his which were more eminent and remarkable.

Of his Piety towards God, which is the neceſſary foundation of all other Graces and Vertues, I ſhall only ſay this, That it was great and quiet, without ſtir and noiſe, and much more in Subſtance and reality, than in ſhew and oſtentation; and did not conſiſt in cenſuring and finding fault with others, but in the due care and government of his own life and actions, and *exerciſing* himſelf, *continually to have a conſcience void of offence toward God and toward men*; in which he was ſuch a proficient, that even after a long acquaintance and familiar converſation with him, it was not eaſie to obſerve any thing that might deſerve blame.

He particularly excell'd in the more peculiar vertues of converſation, in *modeſty*, *humility*, *meekneſs*, *cheerfulneſs*, and in *kindneſs* and *charity towards all men*.

So great was his *modeſty*, that it never appear'd either by word or action that he put any value upon himſelf. This I have often obſerv'd in him, that the Charities which were procur'd chiefly by his application and Induſtry, when he had occaſion to give an account of them, he would rather impute to any one who had but the leaſt hand and part in the obtaining of them, than aſſume any thing of it to himſelf. Another inſtance of his modeſty was, that when he had quitted his Living of St. *Sepulchres* upon ſome diſſatisfaction about the terms of conformity, he willingly forbore preaching, ſaying there was no need of him here in *London* where there ſo many worthy Miniſters, and that he thought he might do as much or more good in another way which could give no offence. Only in the latter years of his life, being better ſatisfi'dd in ſome things he had doubted of before, He had Licenſe from ſome of the Biſhops to preach in *Wales* in his progreſs; which he was the more willing to do, becauſe in ſome places he ſaw great need of it, and he thought he might do it with greater advantage among the Poor people, who were the more likely to regard his inſtructions, being recommended by his great charity ſo well known to them, and of which they had ſo long had the experience and benefit. But where there was no ſuch need, he was very well contented to hear others perſwade men to goodneſs and to practiſe it himſelf.

He was *clothed with humility*, and had in a moſt eminent degree that *ornament of a meek and quiet ſpirit, which S. Peter* ſays, *is in the ſight of God of* ſo *great price:* So that there was not the leaſt appearance either of Pride or Paſſion in any of his words or actions. He was not only free from anger and bitterneſs, but from all affected gravity and moroſeneſs. His converſation was affable and pleaſant; he had a wonderful ſerenity of mind and evenneſs of temper, viſible in his very countenance; he was hardly ever merry, but never melancholly and ſad; and for any thing I could diſcern, after a long and intimate acquaintance with him, he was upon all occaſions and accidents perpetually the ſame; always cheerful, and always kind; of a diſpoſition ready to embrace and oblige all men; allowing others to differ from him, even in opinions that were very dear to him; and provided men did but *fear God and work righteouſneſs*, he lov'd them heartily, how diſtant ſoever from him in judgment about things leſs neceſſary; In all which he is very worthy to be a pattern for men of all Perſwaſions whatſoever.

But that Vertue which of all other ſhone brighteſt in him, and was his moſt proper and peculiar character, was his cheerfull and unwearied diligence in acts of pious Charity. In this he left far behind him all that ever I knew, and, as I ſaid before, had a ſingular ſagacity and prudence in deviſing the moſt effectual ways of doing good, and in managing and diſpoſing his charity to the beſt purpoſes, and to the greateſt extent; always if it were poſſible, making it to ſerve ſome end of Piety; and as the inſtructions of poor children in the Principles of Religion, and furniſhing grown perſons that were ignorant with the *Bible* and other Books; ſtrictly obliging thoſe to whom he gave them to a diligent reading of them, and when he had opportunity exacting of them an account how they had profited by them.

In his occaſional Alms to the poor, in which he was very free and bountiful, the relief he gave them was always mingled with good counſel, and as great a tenderneſs and compaſſion for their ſouls as bodies: which very often attain'd the good effect it was likely to have, the one making way for the other with ſo much advantage, and men being very apt to follow the good adviſe of thoſe, who give them in hand ſo ſenſible a pledge and teſtimony of their good will to them.

This kind of charity muſt needs be very expenſive to him, but he had a plentiful eſtate ſettled upon him and left him by his Father, and he laid it out as liberally in the moſt prudent and effectual ways of Charity he could think of, and upon ſuch perſons as, all circumſtances conſidered, he judg'd to be the fitteſt and moſt proper objects of it.

For about nine or ten years laſt paſt he did, as is well known to many here preſent, almoſt wholly apply his charity to *Wales*, becauſe there he judg'd was moſt occaſion for it: And becauſe this was a very great work, he did not only lay out upon it whatever he could ſpare out of his own eſtate, but employ'd his whole time and pains to excite and engage the charity of others for his aſſiſtance in it.

And in this he had two excellent deſigns. One, to have poor children brought up to read and write, and to be carefully inſtructed in the Principles of Religion: The other, to furniſh perſons of grown Age, the poor eſpecially, with the neceſſary helps and means of knowledge, as the Bible, and other Books of piety and devotion, in their own Language; to which end he procur'd the *Church Catechiſm*, the *Practice of Piety*, and that beſt of Books the *Whole Duty of Man*, beſides ſeveral other pious and uſeful *Treatiſes*, ſome of them to be tranſlated into the *Welch* Tongue, and great numbers of all them to be printed, and ſent down to the chief Towns in *Wales*, to be ſold at eaſie rates to thoſe that were able to buy them, and to be freely given to thoſe that were not.

And in both theſe deſigns, through the bleſſing of God upon his unwearied endeavours, he found very great ſucceſs. For by the large and bountiful contributions which chiefly by his induſtry and prudent application were obtain'd from charitable Perſons of all Ranks and conditions, from the *Nobility* and *Gentry of Wales* and the neighbouring *Counties*, and ſeveral of that Quality in and about *London*; from divers of the Right Reverend *Biſhops*, and of the Clergy; and from that perpetual fountain of charity the City of *London*, led on and encourag'd by the moſt bountiful example of the Right honourable the *Lord Mayor* and the *Court of Aldermen*; to all which he conſtantly added two Thirds of his own eſtate, which as I have been credibly inform'd was two hundred pounds a year; I ſay, by all theſe together there were every year *eight hundred*, ſometime a *thouſand* poor children educated as I ſaid before; and by this example ſeveral of the moſt conſiderable *Towns* of *Wales* were excited to bring up at their own charge the like number of poor children, in the like manner, and under his inſpection and care.

He likewiſe gave very great numbers of the Books above mention'd both in the *Welch* and *Engliſh* Tongues to the poorer ſort, ſo many as were unable to buy them and willing to read them. But which was the greateſt work of all, and amounted indeed to a mighty charge, he procured a new and very fair impreſſion of the Bible and Liturgy of the Church of *England* in the *Welch* Tongue (the former Impreſſion being ſpent, and hardly twenty of them to be had in all *London*,) to the number of eight thouſand; one thouſand whereof were freely given to the poor, and the reſt ſent to the principal Cities and Towns in *Wales* to be ſold to the rich at very reaſonable and low rates, *viz.* at *four ſhillings* apiece well bound and claſped; which was much cheaper than any *Engliſh* Bible was ever ſold that was of ſo fair a print and Paper: A work of that charge, that it was not likely to have been done any other way; And for which this Age, and perhaps the next, will have great cauſe to thank God on his behalf.

In theſe good works he imployed all his time and care and pains, and his whole heart was in them; ſo that he was very little affected with any thing elſe, and ſeldom either minded or knew any thing of the ſtrange occurrences of this troubleſome and buſie Age, ſuch as I think are hardly to be parallel'd in any other. Or if he did mind them, he ſcarce ever ſpoke any thing about them. For this was the buſineſs he laid to heart, and knowing it to be ſo much and ſo certainly the Will of his heavenly Father, it was his meat and drink to be doing of it: and the good ſucceſs he had in it was a continual feaſt to him, and gave him a perpetual ſerenity both of mind and countenance. His great love and zeal for this work made all the pains and difficulties of it ſeem nothing to him: He would riſe early and ſit up late, and continued the ſame diligence and induſtry to the laſt, though he was in the threeſcore and ſeventeenth year of his Age. And that he might manage the diſtribution of this great charity with his own hands, and ſee the good effect of it with his own eyes, he always once, but uſually twice a year, at his own charge travelled over a great part of *Wales*, none of the beſt Countries to travel in: But for the love of God and men he endured all that, together with the extremity of heat and cold (which in their ſeveral ſeaſons are both very great there) not only with patience but with pleaſure. So that all things conſidered there have not, ſince the primitive times of Chriſtianity, been many among the ſons of men to whom that glorious character of the Son of God might be better applied, that *he went about doing good.* And *Wales* may as worthily boaſt of this truly Apoſtolical man as of their famous St. *David*; who was alſo very probably a good man, as thoſe times of ignorance and ſuperſtition went. But his goodneſs is ſo diſguiſed by their fabulous *Legends* and ſtories which give us the account of him, that it is not eaſie to diſcover it. Indeed ridiculous miracles in abundance are reported of him; as, that upon occaſion of a great number of people reſorting from all parts to hear him preach, for the greater advantage of his being heard, a mountain all on a ſudden roſe up miraculouſly under his feet, and his voice was extended to that degree that he might be diſtinctly heard for two or three miles round about. Such phantaſtical miracles as theſe make up a great part of his Hiſtory. And admitting all theſe to be true (which a wiſe man would be loath to do) our departed Friend had that which is much greater and more excellent than all theſe, a fervent charity to God and men; which is more than to *ſpeak* (as they would make us believe St. *David* did) *with the Tongue of men and Angels*, more than to raiſe or remove mountains.

And now methinks it is pitty ſo good a deſign ſo happily proſecuted ſhould fall and die with this good man. And it is now under deliberation, if poſſible, ſtill to continue and carry it on, and a very worthy and charitable perſon pitched upon for that purpoſe, who is willing to undertake that part which he that is gone performed ſo well: But this will depend upon the continuance of the former Charities and the concurrence of thoſe worthy and well-diſpoſed perſons in *Wales* to contribute their part as formerly; which I perſwade my ſelf they will cheerfully do. I will add but one thing more concerning our deceaſed Brother, that though he medled not at all in our preſent heats and differences as a Party, having much better things to mind; yet as a looker on he did very ſadly lament them, and for ſeveral of the laſt years of his life he continued in the Communion of our Church, and, as he himſelf told me, thought himſelf oblig'd in conſcience ſo to do.

He died in the 77th. year of his age, *Octob.* 29th, 1681. It ſo pleaſed God that his death was very ſudden; and ſo ſudden, that in all probability he himſelf hardly perceived it when it happened, for he died in his ſleep; ſo that we may ſay of him as it is ſaid of *David*, *after he had ſerved his generation according to the will of God* he fell aſleep.

I confeſs that a ſudden death is generally undeſirable, and therefore with reaſon we pray againſt it; becauſe ſo very few are ſufficiently prepared for it: But to him the conſtant employment of whoſe life was the beſt preparation for death that was poſſible, no death could be ſudden; nay, it was rather a favour and bleſſing to him, becauſe by how much the more ſudden ſo much the more eaſie: As if God had deſigned to begin the reward of the great pains of his life in an eaſie death. And indeed it was rather a tranſlation than a death; and, ſaving that his body was left behind, what was ſaid of *Enoch* may not unfitly be applied to this pious and good man, with reſpect to the ſuddenneſs of his change; *he walked with God, and was not, for God took him.*

And God grant that we who ſurvive may all of us ſincerely endeavour to tread in the ſteps of his exemplary piety and charity; of his labour of love, his unwearied diligence and patient continuance in doing good, that we may meet with that encouraging commendation which he hath already received from the mouth of our Lord, *Well done good and faithfull ſervant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

Now the God of Peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that great ſhepherd of the ſheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you always that which is pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; To whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

Preached at the
FUNERAL
Of the Reverend
BENJAMIN WHICHCOT, D. D.
May 24*th*, 1683.

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2 COR. v. 6.

Wherefore we are always confident, knowing that whilſt we are at home in the body we are abſent from the Lord.

THeſe Words contain one of the chief grounds of encouragement which the Chriſtian Religion gives us againſt the fear of death. For our clearer underſtanding of them it will be requiſite to conſider the *Context*, looking back as far as the beginning of the *Chapter*; where the *Apoſtle* purſues the argument of the foregoing *Chapter*; which was to comfort and encourage Chriſtians under their afflictions and ſufferings from this conſideration, that theſe did but prepare the way for a greater and more glorious reward; *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. And ſuppoſe the worſt, that theſe ſufferings ſhould extend to death, there is comfort for us likewiſe in this caſe, *ver.* 1. of this *Chapter*, *For we know that if our earthly houſe ~~of this tabernacle were~~ diſſolved, we have a building of God*, &c. *If our earthly houſe of this tabernacle*; he calls our body an *earthly houſe*, and that we may not look upon it as a certain abode and fixed habitation, he doth by way of correction of himſelf add, that it is but a *tabernacle* or tent which muſt ſhortly be taken down: And when it is, *we ſhall have a building of God, a houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. This is a deſcription of our heavenly habitation, in oppoſition to our earthly houſe or tabernacle: It is *a building of God*, not like thoſe houſes or tabernacles which men build, and which are liable to decay and diſſolution, to be taken down or to fall down of themſelves, for ſuch are thoſe houſes of clay which we dwell in *whoſe foundations are in the duſt*, but an habitation prepared by God himſelf, *a houſe not made with hands*; that which is the immediate work of God being in Scripture oppoſed to that which is made with hands and effected by humane concurrence and by natural means; And being the immediate work of God, as it is excellent, ſo it is laſting and durable, which no earthly thing is; *eternal in the heavens*, that is eternal and heavenly.

For in this we groan earneſtly; that is, while we are in this body we groan by reaſon of the preſſures and afflictions of it. *Deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe which is from heaven: If ſo be that being clothed we ſhall not be found naked. Deſiring to be clothed upon*; that is, we could wiſh not to put off theſe bodies, not to be ſtrip'd of them by death, but to be of the number of thoſe who at the coming of our Lord without the putting off theſe bodies ſhall be changed and clothed upon with their houſe which is from heaven, and without dying be inveſted with thoſe ſpiritual and glorious and heavenly bodies which men ſhall have at the Reſurrection.

This I doubt not is the *Apoſtle*'s meaning in theſe Words; in which he ſpeaks according to a common opinion among the Diſciples grounded (as St. *John* tells us) upon a miſtake of our *Saviour's* words concerning him, *If I will that he tarry till I come:* upon which S. *John* tells us that *there went a Saying among the brethren that that diſciple ſhould not die*; that is, that he ſhould live till Chriſt's coming to Judgment, and then be changed; and conſequently that Chriſt would come to Judgment before the end of that Age. Suitable to this common opinion among Chriſtians the *Apoſtle* here ſays, *in this we groan earneſtly, deſiring to be clothed upon with our houſe which is from heaven, if ſo be that being clothed we ſhall not be found naked.* It hath puzzled *Interpreters* what to make of this paſſage, and well it might; for whatever he meant by being clothed, how can they that are clothed be found naked? but I think it is very clear that our *Tranſlatours* have not attained the true Senſe of this paſſage, Εἴ γε καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι, οὐ γυμνοὶ, εὑρεθησόμεθα, which is moſt naturally rendred thus, *If ſo be we ſhall be found clothed, and not naked*: That is, if the coming of Chriſt ſhall find us in the body and not deveſted of it; if at Chriſt's coming to Judgment we ſhall be found alive and not dead. And then the ſenſe of the whole is very clear and current; we are deſirous to be clothed upon with our houſe from heaven (that is, with our Spiritual and immortal bodies) if ſo be it ſhall ſo happen that at the coming of Chriſt we ſhall be found alive in theſe bodies, and not ſtripp'd of them before by death. And then it follows, *For we that are in this tabernacle do groan being burthened* (that is, with the afflictions and preſſures of this life) *not that we would be unclothed* (that is, not that we deſire by death to be deveſted of theſe bodies) *but clothed upon* (that is, if God ſee it good we had rather be found alive, and changed, and without putting off theſe bodies have immortality as it were ſuperinduced) *that ſo mortality might be ſwallowed up of life.* The plain ſenſe is, that he rather deſires (if it may be) to be of the number of thoſe who ſhall be found alive at the coming of Chriſt, and have this mortal and corruptible body while they are clothed with it changed into a ſpiritual and incorruptible body, without the pain and terrour of dying: of which immediate tranſlation into heaven without the painfull divorce of ſoul and body by death, *Enoch* and *Elias* were examples in the old Teſtament.

It follows, *ver.* 5. *Now he that hath wrought for us the ſelf ſame thing is God*: That is, it is he who hath fitted and prepared us for this Glorious change: *who alſo hath given us the earneſt of the Spirit.* The Spirit is frequently ly in Scripture called the *witneſs* and *ſeal* and *earneſt* of our future happineſs and bleſſed Reſurrection or change of theſe vile and earthly bodies into ſpiritual and heavenly bodies. For as the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead by the power of the holy Ghoſt is the great proof and evidence of immortality: ſo the ſpirit of him that raiſed up *Jeſus* from the dead dwelling in us is the pledge and earneſt of our Reſurrection to an immortal life.

From all which the *Apoſtle* concludes in the words of the *Text*, *Therefore we are always confident*, that is, we are always of good courage againſt the fear of death, *knowing that whilſt we are at home in the body we are abſent from the Lord*, ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνδημοῦντες which may better be rendered *whilſt we converſe or ſojourn in the body*, than *whilſt we are at home*; Becauſe the deſign of the *Apoſtle* is to ſhew that the body is not our houſe but out tabernacle; and that whilſt we are in the body we are not at home, but pilgrims and ſtrangers. And this notion the *Heathens* had of our preſent life and condition in this world. *Ex vita diſcedo* (ſaith *Tully*) *tanquam ex hoſpitio non tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura diverſorium nobis, non habitandi locum dedit. We go out of this life as it were from an Inn, and not from our home; nature having deſigned it to us as a place to ſojourn but not to dwell in.*

We are abſent from the Lord; that is, we are detained from the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of God, and kept out of the poſſeſſion of that happineſs which makes Heaven.

So that the *Apoſtle* makes an immediate oppoſition between our continuance in the body, and our bliſsfull enjoyment of God; and lays it down for a certain truth, that whilſt we remain in the body we are detained from our happineſs, and that ſo ſoon as ever we leave the body we ſhall be admitted into it, *knowing, that whilſt we converſe in the body we are abſent from the Lord.* And *ver.* 8. *we are willing rather to be abſent from the body and preſent with the Lord*; intimating that ſo ſoon as we quit theſe bodies we ſhall be admitted to the bleſſed ſight and enjoyment of God.

My deſign from this *Text* is to draw ſome uſeful *Corollaries* or Concluſions from this Aſſertion of the *Apoſtle*, *That whilſt we are in theſe bodies we are detained from our happineſs; and that ſo ſoon as ever we depart out of them we ſhall be admitted to the poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it.* And they are theſe,

1. This Aſſertion ſhews us the vanity and falſhood of that Opinion, or rather dream, concerning the ſleep of the ſoul from the time of death till the general Reſurrection. This is chiefly grounded upon that frequent Metaphor in Scripture by which death is reſembled to ſleep, and thoſe that are dead are ſaid to be fallen aſleep. But this Metaphor is no where in Scripture, that I know of, applied to the ſoul but to the body reſting in the grave in order to its being awakened and raiſed up at the reſurrection. And thus it is frequently uſed with expreſs reference to the body, *Dan.* 12. 2. *Many of them that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake.* *Matth.* 27. 52. *And the graves were opened, and many bodies of ſaints which ſlept aroſe*, Acts 13. 36. *David after he had ſerved his own generation by the will of God fell on ſleep, and was laid to his fathers and ſaw corruption*; which ſurely can no otherwiſe be underſtood than of his body, 1 *Cor.* 5. 21. *Now is Chriſt riſen from the dead and become the firſt fruits of them that ſlept*, that is, the reſurrection of his body is the earneſt and aſſurance that ours alſo ſhall be raiſed. And *ver.* 51. *We ſhall not all ſleep, but ſhall all be changed*; where the *Apoſtle* certainly ſpeaks both of the death and change of theſe corruptible bodies.

1 *Theſſal* 4. 14. *If we believe that Jeſus died and roſe again, even ſo them alſo that ſleep in Jeſus ſhall God bring with him*; That is, the bodies of thoſe that died in the Lord ſhall be raiſed, and accompany him at his coming. So that it is the body which is ſaid in Scripture to ſleep, and not the Soul. For that is utterly inconſiſtent with the *Apoſtle*'s Aſſertion here in the *Text*, that *while we are in the body we are abſent from the Lord*, and that ſo ſoon as we depart out of the body we ſhall be preſent with the Lord. For ſurely *to be with the Lord* muſt ſignifie a ſtate of happineſs, which ſleep is not, but only of inactivity: Beſides, that the *Apoſtle's* Argument would be very flat, and it would be but a cold encouragement againſt the fear of death, that ſo ſoon as we are dead we ſhall fall aſleep and become inſenſible. But the *Apoſtle* uſeth it as an Argument why we ſhould be willing to dye as ſoon as God pleaſeth, and the ſooner the better, becauſe ſo ſoon as we quit theſe bodies we ſhall be preſent with the Lord, that is, admitted to the bliſsful ſight and enjoyment of him: and while we abide in the body we are detained from our happineſs: But if our ſouls ſhall ſleep as well as our bodies till the general Reſurrection, it is all one whether we continue in the body or not, as to any happineſs we ſhall enjoy in the mean time; which is directly contrary to the main ſcope of the *Apoſtle*'s Argument.

2. This Aſſertion of the *Apoſtle*'s doth perfectly conclude againſt the feigned Purgatory of the Church of *Rome*; which ſuppoſeth the far greater number of true and faithful Chriſtians, of thoſe who dye in the Lord and have obtained eternal redemption by him from hell not to paſs immediately into a ſtate of happineſs, but to be detained in the ſuburbs of Hell in extremity of torment (equal to that of hell for degree, though not for duration) till their ſouls be purged, and the guilt of temporal puniſhments, which they are liable to, be ſome way or other paid off and diſcharged. They ſuppoſe indeed ſome very few holy perſons (eſpecially thoſe who ſuffer Martyrdom) to be ſo perfect at their departure out of the body as to paſs immediately into Heaven, becauſe they need no purgation: But moſt Chriſtians they ſuppoſe to dye ſo imperfect that they ſtand in need of being purged; and according to the degree of their imperfection are to be detain'd a ſhorter or a longer time in Purgatory.

But now, beſides that there is no *Text* in *Scripture* frow whence any ſuch ſtate can probably be concluded (as is acknowledged by many learned men of the Church of *Rome*) and even that *Text* which they have moſt inſiſted upon (*they ſhall be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire*) is given up by them as inſufficient to conclude the thing. *Eſtius* is very glad to get off it, by ſaying there is nothing in it againſt Purgatory: why? no body pretends that, but we might reaſonably expect that there ſhould be ſomething for it in a *Text* which hath been ſo often produced and urged by them for the proof of it. I ſay, beſides that there is nothing in Scripture for Purgatory, there are a great many things againſt it, and utterly inconſiſtent with it. In the parable of the *Rich man* and *Lazarus*, which was deſigned to repreſent to us the different ſtates of good and bad men in another world, there is not the leaſt intimation of Purgatory, but that good men paſs immediately into a ſtate of happineſs, and bad men into a place of torment. And St. *John*, *Rev.* 14. 13. pronounceth all that dye in the Lord happy, becauſe *they reſt from their labours*; which they cannot be ſaid to do who are in a ſtate of great anguiſh and torment, as thoſe are ſuppoſed to be who are in Purgatory.

But above all, this reaſoning of Saint *Paul* is utterly inconſiſtent with any imagination of ſuch a ſtate. For he encourageth all Chriſtians in general againſt the fear of death from the conſideration of that happy ſtate they ſhould immediately paſs into, by being admitted into the preſence of God; which ſurely is not Purgatory. *We are of good courage* (ſays he) *and willing rather to be abſent from the body:* And great reaſon we ſhould be ſo, if ſo ſoon as we leave the body we are preſent with the Lord. But no man ſure would be glad to leave the body to go into a place of exquiſite and extreme torment, which they tell us is the caſe of moſt Chriſtians when they die. And what can be more unreaſonable, than to make the *Apoſtle* to uſe an Argument to comfort all Chriſtians againſt the fear of death which concerns but very few in compariſon? So that if the *Apoſtle's* reaſoning be good, that while we are in this life we are detained from our happineſs, and ſo ſoon as we depart this life we paſs immediately into it, and therefore death is deſirable to all good men: I ſay if this reaſoning be good, it is very clear that St. *Paul* knew nothing of the Doctrine now taught in the Church of *Rome* concerning Purgatory; becauſe that is utterly inconſiſtent with what he expreſly aſſerts in this *Chapter*; and quite takes away the force of his whole Argument.

3. To encourage us againſt the fear of death. And this is the Concluſion which the *Apoſtle* makes from this conſideration. *Therefore* (ſays he) *we are of good courage, knowing that whilſt we converſe in the body we are abſent from the Lord.* There is in us a natural love of life, and a natural horrour and dread of death; ſo that our Spirits are apt to ſhrink at the thoughts of the appoach of it. But this fear may very much be mitigated and even overruled by Reaſon and the conſiderations of Religion. For death is not ſo dreadful in it ſelf, as with regard to the conſequences of it: And thoſe will be as we are, comfortable and happy to the good, but diſmal and miſerable to the wicked. So that the only true antidote againſt the fear of death is the hopes of a better life; and the only firm ground of theſe hopes is the mercy of God in *Jeſus Chriſt*, upon our due preparation for another world by repentance and a holy life. For the ſting of death is ſin; and when that is taken away the terrour and bitterneſs, of death is paſt: And then death is ſo far from being dreadful, that in reaſon it is extremely deſireable; becauſe it lets us into a better ſtate, ſuch as only deſerves the name of life. *Hi vivunt qui ex corporum vinculis tanquam é carcere evolaverunt: veſtra vero quæ dicitur vita, mors eſt. They truly live* (could a *Heathen* ſay) *who have made their eſcape out of this priſon of the body; but that which men commonly call life is rather death than life.* To live indeed, is to be well, and to be happy; and that we ſhall never be till we are got beyond the grave.

4. This Conſideration ſhould comfort us under the loſs and death of Friends, which certainly is one of the greateſt grievances and troubles of humane life. For if they be fit for God, and go to him when they die, they are infinitely happier than it was poſſible for them to have been in this world; and the trouble of their abſence from us is fully balanced by their being preſent with the Lord. For why ſhould we lament the end of that life which we are aſſured is the beginning of immortality? One reaſon of our trouble for the loſs of Friends is becauſe we loved them: But it is no ſign of our love to them to grudge and repine at their happineſs. But we hoped to have enjoyed them longer: Be it ſo; yet why ſhould we be troubled that they are happy ſooner than we expected? But they are parted from us, and the thought of this is grievous: But yet the conſideration of their being parted for a while is not near ſo ſad, as the hopes of a happy meeting

again, never to be parted any more, is comfortable and joyful. So that the greater our love to them was, the leſs ſhould be our grief for them, when we conſider that they are happy, and that they are ſafe; paſt all ſtorms, all the troubles and temptations of this life, and out of the reach of all harm and danger for ever. But though the reaſon of our duty in this caſe be very plain, yet the practice of it is very difficult; and when all is ſaid, natural affection will have its courſe: And even after our Judgment is ſatisfied, it will require ſome time to ſtill and quiet our Paſſions.

5. This conſideration ſhould wean us from the love of life; and make us not only contented, but willing and glad to leave this world, whenever it ſhall pleaſe God to call us out of it. This Inference the *Apoſtle* makes, *ver.* 8. *We are confident, I ſay, and willing rather to be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord.* Though there were no ſtate of immortality after this life, yet methinks we ſhould not deſire to live always in this world. *Habet natura* (ſays *Tully*) *ut aliarum rerum, ſic vivendi modum: As nature hath ſet bounds and meaſures to other things, ſo likewiſe to life*; of which men ſhould know when they have enough, and not covet ſo much of it till they be tired and cloyed with it. If there were no other inconvenience in a long life, this is a great one, that in a long courſe of time we unavoidably ſee a great many things which we would not; our own misfortunes and the calamities of others; publick confuſions and diſtractions; the loſs of Friends and Relations; or which is worſe their miſery; or which is worſt of all, their miſcarriage: Eſpecially, a very infirm and tedious old age is very undeſirable: For who would deſire to live long uneaſie to himſelf, and troubleſome to others? It is time for us to be willing to die, when we cannot live with the good will even of our friends: when thoſe who ought to love us beſt think much that we live ſo long, and can hardly forbear to give us broad ſigns that they are weary of our company. In ſuch a caſe a man would almoſt be contented to dye out of civility; and not chuſe to make any long ſtay where he ſees that his company is not acceptable. If we think we can be welcome to a better place, and to a more delightful ſociety, why ſhould we deſire to thruſt our ſelves any longer upon an ill-natured world, upon thoſe who have much ado to refrain from telling us that our room is better than our company?

Some indeed have a very happy and vigorous old age, and the taper of life burns clear in them to the laſt: Their underſtandings are good, their memories and ſenſes tolerable, their humour pleaſant and their converſation acceptable, and their Relations kind and reſpectful to them. But this is a rare felicity, and which ſeldom happens but to thoſe who have lived wiſely and vertuouſly, and by a religious and regular courſe of life have preſerved ſome of their beſt ſpirits to the laſt, and have not by vice and extravagance drawn off life to the dregs, and left nothing to be enjoyed but infirmities and ill humours, guilt and repentance: But on the contrary have prudently laid up ſome conſiderable comforts and ſupports for themſelves againſt this gloomy day; having ſtored their minds with wiſdom and knowledge, and taken care to ſecure to themſelves the comfortable reflections of an uſeful and well-ſpent life, and the favour and loving kindneſs of God which is better than life it ſelf. But generally the extremities of old age are very peeviſh and querulous, and a declining and falling back to the weak and helpleſs condition of Infancy and Childhood. And yet leſs care is commonly taken to pleaſe aged perſons, and leſs kindneſs ſhewed to them (unleſs it be in expectation of receiving greater from them) than to Children: becauſe they are cheriſhed in hopes, the others in deſpair of their growing better. So that if God ſee it good it is not deſirable to live to try nature, and the kindneſs and good will of our Relations to the utmoſt.

Nay there is reaſon enough why we ſhould be well contented to dye in any Age of our life. If we are young, we have taſted the beſt of it: If in our middle Age, we have not only enjoyed all that is deſirable of life, but almoſt all that is tolerable: If we are old, we are come to the dregs of it, and do but ſee the ſame things over and over again, and continually with leſs pleaſure.

Eſpecially if we conſider the happineſs from which we are all this while detained. This life is but our Infancy and childhood in compariſon of the manly pleaſures and employments of the other ſtate. And why ſhould we deſire to be always children; and to linger here below to play the fools yet a little longer? In this ſenſe that high expreſſion of the *Poet* is true,

> -----*Dii celant homines, ut vivere durent,*
> *Quàm ſit dulce mori*----

The Gods conceal from men the ſweetneſs of dying, to make them patient and contented to live.

This life is wholly in order to the other. Do but make ſure to live well, and there is no need of living long. To the purpoſe of preparation for another world, the beſt life is the longeſt. Some live a great pace, and by continual diligence and induſtry in ſerving God and doing good, do really diſpatch more of the buſineſs of life in a few years, than others do in a whole Age; who go ſuch a ſantring pace towards Heaven, as if they were in no haſte to get thither. But if we were always prepared we ſhould rejoyce at the proſpect of our end; as thoſe who have been long toſt at Sea are overjoyed at the ſight of Land.

I have now done with my *Text*, but have another Subject to ſpeak of; that excellent Man in whoſe Place I now ſtand; whom we all knew, and whom all that knew him well did highly eſteem and reverence. He was born in *Shropſhire* of a worthy and ancient Family, the 11*th* of *March*, 1609. was the ſixth Son of his Father: and being bred up to learning, and very capable of it, was ſent to the Univerſity of *Cambridge*, and planted there in *Emanuel* College, where he was choſen Fellow, and was an excellent Tutour and Inſtructour of Youth, and bred up many perſons of Quality, and others who afterwards proved uſeful and eminent; as many perhaps as any Tutour of that Time.

About the age of four or five and thirty he was made Provoſt of *King*'s College; where he was a moſt vigilant and prudent Governour, a great encourager of Learning and good Order, and by his careful and wiſe management of the Eſtate of the College, brought it into a very flouriſhing Condition, and left it ſo.

It cannot be denied (nor am I much concerned to diſſemble it) that here he poſſeſs'd another man's place, who by the iniquity of the times was wrongfully ejected; I mean Dr. *Collins* the famous and learned Divinity-Profeſſor of that Univerſity. During whoſe Life (and he lived many years after) by the free conſent of the College there were two ſhares out of the common Dividend allotted to the Provoſt, one whereof was conſtantly paid to Dr. *Collins*, as if he had been ſtill Provoſt. To this Dr. *Whichcot* did not only give his conſent (without which the thing could not have been done) but was very forward for the doing of it, tho' hereby he did not only conſiderably leſſen his own profit, but likewiſe incur no ſmall cenſure and hazard as the Times then were. And leſt this had not been kindneſs enough to that worthy Perſon whoſe Place he poſſeſſed, in his laſt Will he left to his Son, Sir *John Collins*, a Legacy of one hundred Pounds.

And as he was not wanting either in reſpect or real kindneſs to the rightful Owner, ſo neither did he ſtoop to do any thing unworthy to obtain that Place; for he never took the *Covenant*: And not only ſo, but by the particular friendſhip and intereſt which he had in ſome of the chief of the *Viſitors*, he prevailed to have the greateſt part of the Fellows of that College exempted from that Impoſition; and preſerved them in their Places by that means. And to the Fellows that were ejected by the *Viſitors*, he likewiſe freely conſented that their full dividend for that year ſhould be paid them, even after they were ejected. Among theſe was the Reverend and ingenious Dr. *Charles Maſon*; upon whom after he was ejected, the College did confer a good Living which then fell in their gift, with the conſent of the Provoſt, who, knowing him to be a worthy man, was contented to run the hazard of the diſpleaſure of thoſe Times.

So that I hope none will be hard upon him, that he was contented upon ſuch terms to be in a a capacity to do good in bad Times.

For, beſides his care of the College, he had a very great and good influence upon the Univerſity in general. Every Lord's day in the Afternoon, for almoſt twenty years together, he preached in *Trinity* Church, where he had a great number not only of the young Scholars, but of thoſe of greater ſtanding and beſt repute for Learning in the Univerſity his conſtant and attentive Auditors: And in thoſe wild and unſettled Times contributed more to the forming of the Students of that Univerſity to a ſober ſenſe of Religion than any man in that Age.

After he left *Cambridge* he came to *London*, and was choſen Miniſter of *Black Friars*, where he continued till the dreadfull Fire; and then retired himſelf to a Donative he had at *Milton* near *Cambridge*; where he preached conſtantly, and relieved the poor, and had their Children taught to read at his own charge; and made up differences among the Neighbours. Here he ſtayed till, by the promotion of the Reverend Dr. *Wilkins*, his Predeceſſor in this place, the Biſhoprick of *Cheſter*, he was by his intereſt and recommendation preſented to this Church. But during the building of it, upon the invitation of the Court of Aldermen, in the Mayoralty of Sir *William Turner*, he preached before that Honourable Auditory at *Guild-Hall* Chappel every Sunday in the Afternoon with great acceptance and approbation, for about the ſpace of ſeven years.

When his Church was built, he beſtowed his pains here twice a week, where he had the general love and reſpect of his Pariſh; and a very conſiderable and judicious Auditory, though not very numerous by reaſon of the weakneſs of his voice in his declining age.

It pleaſed God to bleſs him, as with a plentiful Eſtate, ſo with a charitable Mind: Which yet was not ſo well known to many, becauſe in the diſpoſal of his charity he very much affected ſecrecy. He frequently beſtowed his Alms (as I am informed by thoſe who beſt knew) on poor houſe-keepers diſabled by age or ſickneſs to ſupport themſelves, thinking thoſe to be the moſt proper objects of it. He was rather frugal in expence upon himſelf, that ſo he might have wherewithall to relieve the neceſſities of others.

And he was not only charitable in his life, but in a very bountiful manner at his death; bequeathing in pious and charitable Legacies to the value of a thouſand pounds. To the Library of the Univerſity of *Chambridge* fifty pounds: and of *King's College* one hundred pounds: and of *Emanuel* College twenty pounds: to which College he had been a conſiderable Benefactor before; having founded there ſeveral Scholarſhips to the value of a thouſand pounds, out of a Charity with the diſpoſal whereof he was intruſted, and which not without great difficulty and pains he at laſt recovered.

To the Poor of the ſeveral places where his Eſtate lay, and where he had been Miniſter, he gave above one hundred pounds.

Among thoſe who had been his Servants, or were ſo at his death, he diſpoſed in Annuities and Legacies in money to the value of above three hundred pounds.

To other charitable uſes and among the poorer of his Relations, above three hundred pounds.

To every one of his Tenants he left a Legacy according to the proportion of the Eſtate they held, by way of remembrance of him: and to one of them that was gone much behind he remitted in his Will ſeventy pounds. And as became his great goodneſs, he was ever a remarkably kind Landlord, forgiving his Tenants, and always making abatements to them for hard years or any other accidental loſſes that happened to them.

I muſt not omit the wiſe proviſion he made in his Will to prevent Lawſuits among the Legatees, by appointing two or three perſons of greateſt prudence and Authority among his Relations final Arbitrators of all differences that ſhould ariſe.

Having given this account of his laſt Will, I come now to the ſad part of all: ſad, I mean, to us, but happieſt to him. A little before *Eaſter* laſt he went down to *Cambridge*: where, upon taking a great Cold, he fell into a diſtemper which in a few days put a period to his life. He died in the houſe of his ancient and moſt learned Friend, Dr. *Cudworth*, Maſter of *Chriſt's* College. During his ſickneſs he had a conſtant calmneſs and ſerenity of mind: and under all his bodily weakneſs poſſeſt his Soul in great patience. After the Prayers for the Viſitation of the Sick (which he ſaid were excellent Prayers) had been uſed, he was put in mind of receiving the Sacrament; to which he anſwered, that he moſt readily embraced the propoſal: And after he had received it, ſaid to Dr. *Cudworth*, I heartily thank you for this moſt Chriſtian office: I thank you for putting me in mind of receiving this Sacrament: adding this pious ejaculation, *The Lord fulfill all his declarations and promiſes, and pardon all my weakneſſes and imperfections.* He diſclaimed all merit in himſelf; and declared that whatever he was, he was through the grace and goodneſs of God in *Jeſus Chriſt.* He expreſſed likewiſe great diſlike of the Principles of Separation; and ſaid *he was the more deſirous to receive the Sacrament that he might declare his full Communion with the Church of Chriſt all the world over.* He diſclaimed *Popery*, and, as things of near affinity with it, or rather parts of it, *all ſuperſtition and uſurpation upon the conſciences of men.*

He thanked God, *that he had no pain in his body, nor diſquiet in his mind.*

Towards his laſt he ſeemed rather unwilling to be detained any longer in this ſtate; not for any pains he felt in himſelf, but for the trouble he gave his Friends: ſaying to one of them who had with great care attended him all along in his ſickneſs, *My dear Friend, thou haſt taken a great deal of pains to uphold a crazy body, but it will not do: I pray thee give me no more Cordials: for why ſhouldſt thou keep me any longer out of that happy ſtate to which I am going? I thank* God *I hope in his mercy, that it ſhall be well with me.*

And herein God pleaſed particularly to anſwer thoſe devout and well-weighed petitions of his which he frequently uſed in his Prayer before Sermon, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words, and I doubt not thoſe that were his conſtant hearers do well remember them; *And ſuperadd this, O Lord, to all the grace and favour which thou haſt ſhewn us all along in life, not to remove us hence but with all advantage for Eternity, when we ſhall be in a due preparation of mind, in a holy conſtitution of Soul, in a perfect renunciation of the guiſe of this mad and ſinful world, when we ſhall be intirely reſigned up to thee, when we ſhall have clear acts of faith in God by Jeſus Chriſt, high and reverential thoughts of thee in our minds, inlarged and inflamed affections towards thee,* &c. *And whenſoever we ſhall come to leave this world, which will be when thou ſhalt appoint (for the iſſues of life and death are in thy hands) afford us ſuch a mighty power and preſence of thy good Spirit that we may have ſolid conſolation in believing, and avoid all conſternation of mind, all doubtfulneſs and uncertainty concerning our everlaſting condition, and at length depart in the Faith of God's Elect,* &c. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.

Thus you have the ſhort Hiſtory of the life and death of this eminent perſon; whoſe juſt Character cannot be given in few words, and time will not allow me to uſe many. To be able to deſcribe him aright it were neceſſary one ſhould be like him: for which reaſon I muſt content my ſelf with a very imperfect draught of him.

I ſhall not inſiſt upon his exemplary piety and devotion towards God, of which his whole life was one continued Teſtimony. Nor will I praiſe his profound Learning, for which he was juſtly had in ſo great reputation. The moral improvements of his mind, *a God-like temper and diſpoſition* (as he was wont to call it) he chiefly valued and aſpired after; that univerſal charity and goodneſs, which he did continually preach and practiſe.

His Converſation was exceeding kind and affable, grave and winning, prudent and profitable. He was ſlow to declare his judgment, and modeſt in delivering it. Never paſſionate, never peremptory: ſo far from impoſing upon others, that he was rather apt to yield. And though he had a moſt profound and well poized judgment, yet was he of all men I ever knew the moſt patient to hear others differ from him, and the moſt eaſie to be convinced when good Reaſon was offered; and, which is ſeen, more apt to be favourable to another man's Reaſon than his own.

Studious and inquiſitive men commonly at ſuch an age (at forty or fifty at the utmoſt) have fixed and ſetled their judgments in moſt Points, and as it were made their *laſt underſtanding*; ſuppoſing they have thought, or read, or heard what can be ſaid on all ſides of things; and after that, they grow poſitive and impatient of contradiction, thinking it a diſparagement to them to alter their judgment: But our deceaſed Friend was ſo wiſe, as to be willing to learn to the laſt; knowing that no man can grow wiſer without ſome change of his mind, without gaining ſome knowledge which he had not, or correcting ſome error which he had before.

He had attained ſo perfect a maſtery of his Paſſions, that for the latter and greateſt part of his life he was hardly ever ſeen to be tranſported with Anger: and as he was extremely careful not to provoke any man, ſo not to be provoked by any; uſing to ſay, *if I provoke a man he is the worſe for my company, and if I ſuffer my ſelf to be provoked by him I ſhall be the worſe for his.*

He very ſeldom reproved any perſon in company otherwiſe than by ſilence, or ſome ſign of uneaſineſs, or ſome very ſoft and gentle word; which yet from the reſpect men generally bore to him did often prove effectual. For he underſtood humane nature very well, and how to apply himſelf to it in the moſt eaſie and effectual ways.

He was a great encourager and kind director of young Divines: and one of the moſt candid hearers of Sermons, I think, that ever was: So that though all men did mightily reverence his Judgment; yet no man had reaſon to fear his Cenſure. He never ſpake well of himſelf, nor ill of others: making good that ſaying of *Panſa* in *Tully*, *Neminem alterius, qui ſuæ confideret virtuti, invidere*; that ***no man is apt to envy the worth and vertues of another, that hath any of his own to truſt to.***

In a word, he had all thoſe Vertues, and in a high degree, which an excellent temper, great conſideration, long care and watchfulneſs over himſelf, together with the aſſiſtance of God's grace (which he continually implored, and mightily relied upon) are apt to produce. Particularly he excelled in the vertues of Converſation, humanity, and gentleneſs, and humility, a prudent and peaceable and reconciling temper. And God knows we could very ill at this time have ſpared ſuch a Man; and have loſt from among us as it were ſo much balm for the healing of the Nation, which is now ſo miſerably rent and torn by thoſe wounds which we madly give our ſelves. But ſince God hath thought good to deprive us of him, let his vertues live in our memory, and his example in our lives. Let us endeavour to be what he was, and we ſhall one day be what he now is; of bleſſed memory on Earth, and happy for ever in Heaven.

And now methinks the conſideration of the Argument I have been upon, and of that great Example that is before us, ſhould raiſe our minds above this world, and fix them upon the glory and happineſs of the other. Let us then begin heaven here, in the frame and temper of our minds, in our heavenly affections and converſation; in a due preparation for, and in earneſt deſires and breathings after that bleſſed ſtate which we firmly believe and aſſuredly hope to be one day poſſeſſed of: when we ſhall be removed out of this ſink of ſin and ſorrows into the Regions of bliſs and immortality: where we ſhall meet all thoſe worthy and excellent perſons who are gone before us, and whoſe converſation was ſo delightful to us in this world; and will be much more ſo to us in the other, when the Spirits of juſt men ſhall be made perfect, and ſhall be quit of all thoſe infirmities which did attend and leſſen them in this mortal ſtate; when we ſhall meet again with our dear Brother, and all thoſe good men whom we knew in this world, and with the Saints and excellent perſons of all Ages to enjoy their bleſſed friendſhip and ſociety for ever, in the preſence of the bleſſed God where is *fulneſs of joy, at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for evermore.*

In a firm perſwaſion of this happy ſtate let us every one of us ſay with *David*, and with the ſame ardency of affection that he did, *As the Hart panteth after the water brooks, ſo panteth my ſoul after thee, O God; My ſoul thirſteth for God, for the living God; O when ſhall I come and appear before God*; that ſo the life which we now live in this world may be a *patient continuance in well doing* in a joyful *expectation of the bleſſed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all honour and glory, now and for ever.

Now the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlaſting covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do his will; working in us always that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; To whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

A PERSUASIVE TO *Frequent Communion.*

1 COR. xi. 26,27,28.

For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come.

Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and bloud of the Lord.

But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

MY deſign in this Argument is, from the conſideration of the Nature of this Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, and of the perpetual Uſe of it to the end of the world, to awaken men to a ſenſe of their duty, and the great obligation which lies upon them to the more frequent receiving of it. And there is the greater need to make men ſenſible of their duty in this particular, becauſe in this laſt Age by the unwary diſcourſe of ſome concerning the nature of this Sacrament and the danger of receiving it unworthily, ſuch doubts and fears have been raiſed in the minds of men as utterly to deter many, and in a great meaſure to diſcourage almoſt the generality of Chriſtians from the uſe of it; to the great prejudice and danger of men's ſouls, and the viſible abatement of Piety by the groſs neglect of ſo excellent a means of our growth and improvement in it; and to the mighty Scandal of our Religion, by the general diſuſe and contempt of ſo plain and ſolemn an Inſtitution of our bleſſed Lord and Saviour.

Therefore I ſhall take occaſion as briefly and clearly as I can to treat of theſe *four* Points.

Firſt, Of the *Perpetuity* of this Inſtitution; this the Apoſtle ſignifies when he ſaith, that *by eating this Bread, and drinking this Cup, we do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come.*

Secondly, Of the *Obligation* that lies upon all Chriſtians to a frequent obſervance of this Inſtitution; this is ſignified in that expreſſion of the Apoſtle, *as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup*: which expreſſion conſidered and compared together with the practiſe of the Primitive Church, does imply an Obligation upon Chriſtians to the frequent receiving of this Sacrament.

Thirdly, I ſhall endeavour to ſatisfie the *Objections* and Scruples which have been raiſed in the minds of men, and particularly of many devout and ſincere Chriſtians, to their great diſcouragement from their receiving this Sacrament, at leaſt ſo frequently as they ought: which Objections are chiefly grounded upon what the Apoſtle ſays, *Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*: and *doth eat and drink damnation to himſelf.*

Fourthly, What *Preparation* of our ſelves is neceſſary in order to our worthy receiving of this Sacrament: which will give me occaſion to explain the Apoſtle's meaning in thoſe Words, *But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.*

I. I. For the *Perpetuity* of this Inſtitution, implied in thoſe words, *For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew forth the Lord's Death till he come*; or the Words may be read *imperatively* and by way of Precept, *ſhew ye forth the Lord's Death till he come.* In the three *verſes* immediately before, the Apoſtle particularly declares the Inſtitution of this Sacrament, with the manner and circumſtances of it, as he had received it not only by the hands of the Apoſtles, but, as the words ſeem rather to intimate, by immediate Revelation from our Lord himſelf, *ver.* 23. *For I have received of the Lord that which I alſo delivered unto you: that the Lord Jeſus in the ſame night that he was betrayed took Bread, and when he had given Thanks he brake it, and ſaid, take, eat, this is my Body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the ſame manner alſo he took the Cup when he had ſupped, ſaying, this Cup is the New Teſtament in my Blood: this do as often as ye ſhall drink it in remembrance of me.* So that the Inſtitution is in theſe Words, *this do in remembrance of me.* In which words our Lord commands his Diſciples after his Death to repeat theſe occaſions of *taking* and *breaking* and *eating the Bread*, and of *drinking of the Cup*, by way of ſolemn Commemoration of him. Now whether this was to be done by them once only, or oftner; and whether by the Diſciples only, during their lives or by all Chriſtians afterwards in all ſucceſſive Ages of the Church, is not ſo certain merely from the force of theſe Words, *do this in remembrance of me*: but what the Apoſtle adds puts the matter out of all doubt, that the Inſtitution of this Sacrament was intended, not only for the Apoſtles, and for that Age, but for all Chriſtians, and for all Ages of the Chriſtian Church; *For as often as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's Death till he come*: that is, until the time of his ſecond coming, which will be at the end of the world. So that this Sacrament was deſigned to be a ſtanding Commemoration of the Death and Paſſion of our Lord till he ſhould come to Judgment; and conſequently the Obligation that lies upon Chriſtians to the obſervation of it is perpetual, and ſhall never ceaſe to the end of the world.

So that it is a vain conceit and mere dream of the *Enthuſiaſts* concerning the *ſeculum Spritùs Sancti, the Age* and diſpenſation *of the Holy Ghoſt*, when as they ſuppoſe, all humane Teaching ſhall ceaſe and all external Ordinances and Inſtitutions in Religion ſhall vaniſh, and there ſhall be no farther uſe of them. Whereas it is very plain from the *New Teſtament* that Prayer, and outward Teaching, and the Uſe of the two Sacraments, were intended to continue among Chriſtians in all Ages. As for *Prayer*, (beſides our natural Obligation to this duty, if there were no reavealed Religion) we are by our Saviour particularly exhorted to *watch and pray* with regard to the day of Judgment, and in conſideration of the uncertainty of the time when it ſhall be: And therefore this will always be a Duty incumbent upon Chriſtians till the day of Judgment, becauſe it is preſcribed as one of the beſt ways of Preparation for it. That *outward Teaching* likewiſe and *Baptiſm* were intended to be perpetual is no leſs plain, becauſe Chriſt hath expreſly promiſed to be with the Teachers of his Church in the uſe of theſe Ordinances to the end of the World, *Matth.* 28. 19, 20. *Go and diſciple all Nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: and lo I am with you always to the end of the World.* Not only to the end of that particular Age, but to the end of the Goſpel Age, and the conſummation of all Ages, as the phraſe clearly imports. And it is as plain from this *Text*, that the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* was intended for a perpetual Inſtitution in the Chriſtian Church, till the ſecond coming of Chriſt, *viz.* his coming to Judgment: Becauſe St. *Paul* tells us, that by theſe Sacramental Signs the Death of Chriſt is to be repreſented and commemorated till he comes. *Do this in remembrance of me: For as oft as ye eat of this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew the Lord's death till he come.*

And if this be the End and Uſe of this Sacrament, to be a ſolemn remembrance of the Death and ſufferings of our Lord during his abſence from us, that is, till his coming to Judgment, then this Sacrament will never be out of date till the ſecond coming of our Lord. The conſideration whereof ſhould mightily ſtrengthen and encourage our Faith in the hope of Eternal Life ſo often as they partake of this Sacrament: ſince our Lord hath left it to us as a memorial of himſelf till he come to tranſlate his Church into Heaven, and as a ſure pledge that he will come again at the end of the World and inveſt us in that Glory which he is now gone before to prepare for us. So that as often as we approach the Table of the Lord, we ſhould comfort our ſelves with the thoughts of that bleſſed time when we ſhall eat and drink with him in his Kingdom, and ſhall be admitted to the great Feaſt of the Lamb, and to eternal Communion with God the Judge of all, and with our bleſſed and glorified Redeemer, and the holy Angels, and the Spirits of juſt men made perfect.

And the ſame conſideration ſhould likewiſe make us afraid to receive this Sacrament unworthily, without due preparation for it and without worthy effects of it upon our Hearts and Lives. Becauſe of that dreadful Sentence of condemnation which at the ſecond coming of our Lord ſhall be paſt upon thoſe, who by the profanation of this ſolemn Inſtitution trample under foot the Son of God, and contemn the Blood of the Covenant; that Covenant of Grace and Mercy which God hath ratified with Mankind by the blood of his Son. The Apoſtle tells us that *he that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord*, and *eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf.* This indeed is ſpoken of temporal Judgment (as I ſhall ſhew in the later part of this Diſcourſe,) but the Apoſtle likewiſe ſuppoſeth, that if theſe temporal Judgments had not their effect to bring men to Repentance, but they ſtill perſiſted in the Profanation of this holy Sacrament, they ſhould at laſt *be condemned with the World.* For as he that partaketh worthily of the Sacrament confirms his intereſt in the promiſes of the Goſpel, and his Title to eternal Life; ſo he that receives this Sacrament unworthily, that is without due Reverence, and without fruits meet for it; nay, on the contrary, continues to live in ſin whilſt he commemorates the Death of Chriſt, *who gave himſelf for* *us that he might redeem us from all iniquity*, this man aggravates and ſeals his own Damnation, becauſe he is guilty of the Body and Blood of Chriſt, not only by the contempt of it, but by renewing in ſome ſort the cauſe of his ſufferings, and as it were *crucifying to himſelf afreſh the Lord of life and glory, and putting him to an open ſhame.* And when the great Judge of the world ſhall appear and paſs final Sentence upon men, ſuch obſtinate and impenitent wretches as could not be wrought upon by the remembrance of the deareſt love of their dying Lord, nor be engaged to leave their ſins by all the tyes and obligations of this holy Sacrament, ſhall have their portion with *Pilate* and *Judas*, with the *chief Prieſts* and *Souldiers*, who were the betrayers and murtherers of the Lord of life and glory; and ſhall be dealt withall as thoſe who are in ſome ſort *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* Which ſevere threatning ought not to diſcourage men from the Sacrament, but to deter all thoſe from their ſins who think of engaging themſelves to God by ſo ſolemn and holy a Covenant. It is by no means a ſufficient Reaſon to make men fly from the Sacrament, but certainly one of the moſt powerful Arguments in the world to make men forſake their ſins; as I ſhall ſhew more fully under the *third* head of this Diſcourſe.

II. II. The *Obligation* that lies upon all Chriſtians to the frequent obſervance and practice of this Inſtitution. For though it be not neceſſarily implied in theſe Words, *as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup*; yet if we compare theſe Words of the *Apoſtle* with the uſage and practice of Chriſtians at that time, which was to communicate in this holy Sacrament ſo often as they ſolemnly met together to worſhip God, they plainly ſuppoſe and recommend to us the frequent uſe of this Sacrament, or rather imply an obligation upon Chriſtians to embrace all opportunities of receiving it. For the ſenſe and meaning of any Law or Inſtitution is beſt underſtood by the general practice which follows immediately upon it.

And to convince men of their obligation hereunto, and to engage them to a ſuitable practice, I ſhall now endeavour with all the plainneſs and force of perſwaſion I can: And ſo much the more, becauſe the neglect of it among Chriſtians is grown ſo general, and a great many perſons from a ſuperſtitious awe and reverence of this Sacrament are by degrees fallen into a profane neglect and contempt of it.

I ſhall briefly mention a *threefold* Obligation lying upon all Chriſtians to frequent Communion in this holy Sacrament; each of them ſufficient of it ſelf, but all of them together of the greateſt force imaginable to engage us hereunto.

1. We are obliged in point of *indiſpenſable duty*, and in obedience to a plain precept and moſt ſolemn inſtitution of our bleſſed Saviour that great *Lawgiver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy, as* St. *James* calls him: He hath bid us *do this*. And S. *Paul* who declares nothing in this matter but what he tells us he *received from the Lord*, admoniſheth us to do it *often*. Now for any man that profeſſeth himſelf a Chriſtian to live in the open and continued contempt or neglect of a plain Law and Inſtitution of *Chriſt* is utterly inconſiſtent with ſuch a profeſſion. To ſuch our Lord may ſay as he did to the *Jews*, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay?* How far the Ignorance of this Inſtitution, or the miſtakes which men have been led into about it, may extenuate this neglect is another conſideration. But after we know our Lord's will in this particular and have the Law plainly laid before us, there is no cloak for our ſin. For nothing can excuſe the

wilful neglect of a plain Inſtitution from a downright contempt of our Saviour's Authority.

2. We are likewiſe obliged hereunto in point of *Intereſt*. The benefits which we expect to be derived and aſſured to us by this Sacrament are all the bleſſing of the new Covenant, the forgiveneſs of our ſins, the grace and aſſiſtance of God's holy Spirit to enable us to perform the conditions of this Covenant required on our part; and the comforts of God's holy Spirit to encourage us in well doing, and to ſupport us under ſufferings; and the glorious reward of eternal life. So that in neglecting this Sacrament we neglect our own intereſt and happineſs, we forſake our own mercies, and judge our ſelves unworthy of all the bleſſings of the Goſpel, and deprive our ſelves of one of the beſt means and advantages of confirming and conveying theſe bleſſings to us. So that if we had not a due ſenſe of our *duty*, the conſideration of our own *intereſt* ſhould oblige us not to neglect ſo excellent and ſo effectual a means of promoting our own comfort and happineſs.

3. We are likewiſe particularly obliged in point of *gratitude* to the careful obſervance of this Inſtitution. This was the particular thing our Lord gave in charge when he was going to lay down his life for us, *do this in remembrance of me*. Men uſe religiouſly to obſerve the charge of a dying friend, and, unleſs it be very difficult and unreaſonable, to do what he deſires: But this is the charge of our beſt friend (nay of the greateſt friend and benefactour of all mankind) when he was preparing himſelf to dye in our ſtead and to offer up himſelf a ſacrifice for us; to undergo the moſt grievous pains and ſufferings for our ſakes, and to yield up himſelf to the worſt of temporal deaths that he might deliver us from the bitter pains of eternal death. And can we deny him any thing he asks of us who was going to do all this for us? Can we deny him this? ſo little grievous and burthenſome in it ſelf, ſo infinitely beneficial to us? Had ſuch a friend, and in ſuch circumſtances, bid us do ſome great thing would we not have done it? how much more when he hath only ſaid, *do this in remembrance of me*; when he hath only commended to us one of the moſt natural and delightful Actions, as a fit repreſentation and memorial of his wonderful love to us, and of his cruel ſufferings for our ſakes; when he hath only enjoyned us, in a thankful commemoration of his goodneſs, to meet at his Table and to remember what he hath done for us, to look upon him whom we have pierced, and to reſolve to grieve and wound him no more? Can we without the moſt horrible ingratitude neglect this dying charge of our Sovereign and our Saviour, the great friend and lover of ſouls; A command ſo reaſonable, ſo eaſie, ſo full of bleſſings and benefits to the faithful obſervers of it!

One would think it were no difficult matter to convince men of their duty in this particular, and of the neceſſity of obſerving ſo plain an Inſtitution of our Lord; that it were no hard thing to perſwade men to their intereſt, and to be willing to partake of thoſe great and manifold bleſſings which all Chriſtians believe to be promiſed and made good to the frequent and worthy Receivers of this Sacrament. Where then lies the difficulty; what ſhould be the cauſe of all this backwardneſs which we ſee in men ſo plain, ſo neceſſary, and ſo beneficial a duty? The truth is, men have been greatly diſcouraged from this Sacrament by the unwary preſſing and inculcating of two great truths; *the danger of the unworthy receiving of this holy Sacrament, and the neceſſity of a due preparation for it.* Which brings me to the

III. *Third* Particular I propoſed, which was to endeavour to ſatisfie the *Objections* and *Scruples* which have been raiſed in the minds of men, and particularly III.

ticularly of many devout and ſincere Chriſtians, to their great diſcouragement from the receiving of this Sacrament, at leaſt ſo frequently as they ought. And theſe Objections, I told you, are chiefly grounded upon what the *Apoſtle* ſays at the 27*th. verſe. Wherefore whoſoever ſhall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* And again *ver.* 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himſelf.* Upon the miſtake and miſapplication of theſe *Texts* have been grounded *two* Objections, of great force to diſcourage men from this Sacrament, which I ſhall endeavour with all the tenderneſs and clearneſs I can to remove. *Firſt,* That the danger of unworthy receiving being ſo very great, it ſeems the ſafeſt way not to receive at all. *Secondly,* That ſo much preparation and worthineſs being required in order to our worthy Receiving, the more timerous ſort of devout Chriſtians can never think themſelves duly enough qualified for ſo ſacred an Action.

Object. 1. 1. That the danger of unworthy receiving being ſo very great it ſeems the ſafeſt way wholly to refrain from this Sacrament, and not to receive it at all. But this Objection is evidently of no force if there be (as moſt certainly there is) as great or greater danger on the other hand, *viz.* in the neglect of this Duty: And ſo though the danger of unworthy receiving be avoided by not receiving, yet the danger of neglecting and condemning a plain Inſtitution of Chriſt is not thereby avoided. Surely they in the *Parable* that refuſed to come to the *marriage-feaſt* of the *King's Son,* and *made light* of that gracious invitation were at leaſt as faulty as he who came without *a wedding garment.* And we find in the concluſion of the *Parable,* that as he was ſeverely puniſhed for his diſreſpect, ſo they were deſtroyed for their diſobedience. Nay of the two it is the greater ſign of contempt wholly to neglect the Sacrament, than to partake of it without ſome due qualification. The greateſt indiſpoſition that can be for this holy Sacrament is ones being a bad man, and he may be as bad, and is more likely to continue ſo, who wilfully neglects this Sacrament, than he that comes to it with any degree of reverence and preparation, though much leſs than he ought: And ſurely it is very hard for men to come to ſo ſolemn an Ordinance without ſome kind of religious awe upon their Spirits, and without ſome good thoughts and reſolutions, at leaſt for the preſent. If a man that lives in any known wickedneſs of life do before he receive the Sacrament ſet himſelf ſeriouſly to be humbled for his ſins, and to repent of them, and to beg God's grace and aſſiſtance againſt them; and after the receiving of it, does continue for ſome time in theſe good reſolutions, though after a while he may poſſibly relapſe into the ſame ſins again; this is ſome kind of reſtraint to a wicked life; and theſe good moods and fits of repentance and reformation are much better than a conſtant and uninterrupted courſe of ſin: even this *righteouſneſs,* which is but *as the morning cloud and the early dew which ſo ſoon paſſeth away,* is better than none.

And indeed ſcarce any man can think of coming to the Sacrament, but he will by this conſideration be excited to ſome good purpoſes, and put upon ſome ſort of endeavour to amend and reform his life: and though he be very much under the bondage and power of evil habits, if he do with any competent degree of ſincerity (and it is his own fault if he do not) make uſe of this excellent means and inſtrument for the mortifying and ſubduing of his luſts and for the obtaining of God's grace and aſſiſtance, it may pleaſe God by the uſe of theſe means ſo to abate the force and power of his luſts, and to imprint ſuch conſiderations upon his mind in the receiving of this holy Sacrament and preparing himſelf for it, that he may at laſt break off his wicked courſe and become a good man.

But, on the other hand, as to thoſe who neglect this Sacrament, there is hardly any thing left to reſtrain them from the greateſt enormities of life, and to give a check to them in their evil courſe: nothing but the penalty of humane Laws, which men may avoid and yet be wicked enough. Heretofore men uſed to be reſtrained from great and ſcandalous vices by ſhame and fear of diſgrace, and would abſtain from many ſins out of regard to their honour and reputation among men: But men have hardened their faces in this degenerate Age, and thoſe gentle reſtraints of modeſty which governed and kept men in order heretofore ſignifie nothing now adays: Bluſhing is out of faſhion, and ſhame is ceaſed from among the Children of men.

But the Sacrament did always uſe to lay ſome kind of reſtraint upon the worſt of men: and if it did not wholly reform them, it would at leaſt have ſome good effect upon them for a time: If it did not make men good, yet it would make them reſolve to be ſo, and leave ſome good thoughts and impreſſions upon their minds.

So that I doubt not but it hath been a thing of very bad conſequence, to diſcourage men ſo much from the Sacrament, as the way hath been of late years: And that many men who were under ſome kind of check before, ſince they have been driven away from the Sacrament have quite let looſe the reins, and proſtituted themſelves to all manner of impiety and vice. And among the many ill effects of our paſt confuſions, this is none of the leaſt, That in many Congregations of this Kingdom Chriſtians were generally diſuſed and deterred from the Sacrament, upon a pretence that they were unfit for it: and being ſo, they muſt neceſſarily incur the danger of unworthy receiving; and therefore they had better wholly to abſtain from it. By which it came to paſs that in very many Places this great and ſolemn Inſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion was almoſt quite forgotten, as if it had been no part of it; and the remembrance of Chriſt's death even loſt among Chriſtians: So that many Congregations in *England* might juſtly have taken up the complaint of the Woman at our Saviour's Sepulchre, *they have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid him.*

But ſurely men did not well conſider what they did, nor what the conſequences of it would be, when they did ſo earneſtly diſſwade men from the Sacrament. 'Tis true indeed the danger of unworthy receiving is great; but the proper inference and concluſion from hence is not that men ſhould upon this conſideration be deterred from the Sacrament, but that they ſhould be affrighted from their ſins, and from that wicked courſe of life which is an habitual indiſpoſition and unworthineſs. St. *Paul* indeed (as I obſerved before) truly repreſents, and very much aggravates the danger of the unworthy receiving of this Sacrament; but he did not deter the *Corinthians* from it, becauſe they had ſometimes come to it without due reverence, but exhorts them to amend what had been amiſs and to come better prepared and diſpoſed for the future. And therefore after that terrible declaration in the Text, *Whoſoever ſhall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord,* he does not add, therefore let Chriſtians take heed of coming to the Sacrament, but, let them come prepared and with due reverence, not as to a common meal, but to a ſolemn participation of the body and blood of Chriſt; *but let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.*

For, if this be a good reaſon to abſtain from the Sacrament, for fear of performing ſo ſacred an action in an undue manner, it were beſt for a bad man to lay aſide all Religion and to give over the exerciſe of all the duties of piety, of prayer, of reading and hearing the Word of God; becauſe there is a proportionable danger in the unworthy and unprofitable uſe of any of theſe. *The prayer of the wicked* (that is, of one that reſolves to continue ſo) *is an abomination to the Lord.* And our *Saviour* gives us the ſame caution concerning hearing the Word of God; *take heed how you hear.* And St. *Paul* tells us, that thoſe who are not reformed by the Doctrine of the *Goſpel,* it is *the ſavour of death,* that is, deadly and damnable to ſuch perſons.

But now will any man from hence argue, that it is beſt for a wicked man not to pray, nor to hear or read the Word of God, leſt by ſo doing he ſhould endanger and aggravate his condemnation? And yet there is as much reaſon from this conſideration to perſwade men to give over praying and attending to God's Word, as to lay aſide the uſe of the Sacrament. And it is every whit as true that he that prays unworthily and hears the Word of God unworthily, that is, without fruit and benefit, is guilty of a great contempt of God and of our bleſſed Saviour; and by his indevout prayers and unfruitful hearing of God's Word does further and aggravate his own damnation: I ſay, this is every whit as true, as that he that eats and drinks the Sacrament unworthily is guilty of a high contempt of Chriſt, and *eats and drinks his own Judgment*; ſo that the danger of the unworthy performing this ſo ſacred an action is no otherwiſe a reaſon to any man to abſtain from the Sacrament, than it is an Argument to him to caſt off all Religion. He that unworthily uſeth or performs any part of Religion is in an evil and dangerous condition; but he that caſts off all Religion plungeth himſelf into a moſt deſperate ſtate, and does certainly damn himſelf to avoid the danger of damnation: Becauſe he that caſts off all Religion throws off all the means whereby he ſhould be reclaimed and brought into a better ſtate. I cannot more fitly illuſtrate this matter than by this plain Similitude: He that eats and drinks imtemperately endangers his health and his life, but he that to avoid this danger will not eat at all, I need not tell you what will certainly become of him in a very ſhort ſpace.

There are ſome conſcientious perſons who abſtain from the Sacrament upon an apprehenſion that the ſins which they ſhall commit afterwards are unpardonable. But this is a great miſtake; our Saviour having ſo plainly declared that all manner of ſin ſhall be forgiven men except the blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt; ſuch as was that of the *Phariſees,* who as our Saviour tells us blaſphemed the Holy Ghoſt in aſcribing thoſe great miracles which they ſaw him work, and which he really wrought by the Spirit of God, to the power of the Devil. Indeed to ſin deliberately after ſo ſolemn an engagement to the contrary is a great aggravation of ſin, but not ſuch as to make it unpardonable. But the neglect of the Sacrament is not the way to prevent theſe ſins; but, on the contrary, the conſtannt receiving of it with the beſt preparation we can is one of the moſt effectual means to prevent ſin for the future, and to obtain the aſſiſtance of God's grace to that end: And if we fall into ſin afterwards, we may be renewed by repentance; *for we have an advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous, who is the propitiation for our ſins*; and as ſuch, is in a very lively and affecting manner exhibited to us in this bleſſed Sacrament of his body broken, and his blood ſhed for the remiſſion of our ſins. Can we think that the Primitive Chriſtians, who ſo frequently received this holy Sacrament, did never after the receiving of it fall into any deliberate ſin? undoubtedly, many of them did; but far be it from us to think that ſuch ſins were unpardonable, and that ſo many good men ſhould becauſe of their careful and conſcientious obſervance of our Lord's Inſtitution unavoidably fall into condemnation.

To draw to a concluſion of this matter: ſuch groundleſs fears and jealouſies as theſe may be a ſign of a good meaning, but they are certainly a ſign of an injudicious mind. For if we ſtand upon theſe Scruples, no man perhaps was ever ſo worthily prepared to draw near to God in any duty of Religion, but there was ſtill ſome defect or other in the diſpoſition of his mind, and the degree of his preparation. But if we prepare our ſelves as well as we can, this is all God expects. And for our fears of falling into ſin afterwards, there is this plain anſwer to be given to it; that the danger of falling into ſin is not prevented by neglecting the Sacrament, but encreaſed: becauſe a powerfull and probable means of preſerving men from ſin is neglected. And why ſhould not every ſincere Chriſtian, by the receiving of this Sacrament and renewing his Covenant with God, rather hope to be confirmed in goodneſs, and to receive farther aſſiſtances of God's grace and holy Spirit to ſtrengthen him againſt ſin and to enable him to ſubdue it; than trouble himſelf with fears which are either without ground, or if they are not, are no ſufficient reaſon to keep any man from the Sacrament? We cannot ſurely entertain ſo unworthy a thought of God and our bleſſed Saviour, as to imagine that he did inſtitute the Sacrament not for the furtherance of our Salvation, but as a ſnare, and an occaſion of our ruine and damnation. This were to pervert the gracious deſign of God, and to turn the cup of Salvation into a cup of deadly poiſon to the ſouls of men.

All then that can reaſonably be inferred from the danger of unworthy receiving is, that upon this conſideration men ſhould be quickned to come to the Sacrament with a due preparation of mind, and ſo much the more to fortifie their reſolutions of living ſutably to that holy Covenant which they ſolemnly renew every time they receive this holy Sacrament. This conſideration ought to convince us of the abſolute neceſſity of a good life, but not to deter us from the uſe of any means which may contribute to make us good. Therefore (as a learned *Divine* ſays very well) this Sacrament can be neglected by none but thoſe that do not underſtand it, but thoſe who are unwilling to be tyed to their duty and are afraid of being engaged to uſe their beſt diligence to keep the commandments of Chriſt: And ſuch perſons have no reaſon to fear being in a worſe condition, ſince they are already in ſo bad a ſtate. And thus much may ſuffice for anſwer to the *firſt objection* concerning the great danger of unworthy receiving this holy Sacrament. I proceed to the

2. *Second objection,* which was this; That ſo much preparation and worthineſs being required to our worthy receiving, the more timorous ſort of Chriſtians can never think themſelves duly enough qualified for ſo ſacred an Action. *Object. 2.*

For a full Anſwer to this Objection, I ſhall endeavour briefly to clear theſe *three* things. *Firſt,* That every degree of Imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to refrain from it. *Secondly,* That a total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and ſubſtance of it, though it render us unfit at preſent to receive this Sacrament, yet it does by no means excuſe our neglect of it. *Thirdly,* That the proper Inference and concluſion from the total want of a due preparation is not to caſt off all thoughts of receiving the Sacrament, but immediately to ſet upon the work of Preparation that ſo we may be fit to receive it. And if I can clearly make out theſe *three* things, I hope this Objection is fully anſwered.

1. That every degree of imperfection in our preparation for this Sacrament is not a ſufficient reaſon for men to abſtain from it: For then no man ſhould ever receive it. For who is every way worthy, and in all degrees and reſpects duly qualified to approach the preſence of God in any of the duties of his Worſhip and Service? Who can *waſh his hands in innocency*, that ſo he may be perfectly fit to approach God's Altar? *There is not a man on earth that lives and ſins not.* The Graces of the beſt men are imperfect; and every imperfection in grace and goodneſs is an imperfection in the diſpoſition and preparation of our minds for this holy Sacrament: But if we do heartily repent of our ſins, and ſincerely reſolve to obey and perform the terms of the Goſpel, and of that Covenant which we entred into by Baptiſm, and are going ſolemnly to renew and confirm by our receiving of this Sacrament, we are at leaſt in ſome degree and in the main qualified to partake of this holy Sacrament; and the way for us to be more fit is to receive this Sacrament frequently, that by this ſpiritual food of God's appointing, by *this living bread which comes down from heaven* our ſouls may be nouriſhed in goodneſs, and new ſtrength and vertue may be continually derived to us for the purifying of our hearts and enabling us to run the ways of God's commandments with more conſtancy and delight. For the way *to grow in grace* and to be *ſtrengthened with all might in the inner man*, and to *abound in all the fruits of righteouſneſs which by Chriſt Jeſus are to the praiſe and glory of God*, is with care and conſcience to uſe thoſe means which God hath appointed for this end: And if we will neglect the uſe of theſe means it is to no purpoſe for us to pray to God for his grace and aſſiſtance. We may tire our ſelves with our devotions and fill heaven with vain complaints, and yet by all this importunity obtain nothing at God's hand: Like lazy beggars that are always complaining and always asking, but will not work, will do nothing to help themſelves and better their condition, and therefore are never like to move the pity and compaſſion of others. If we expect God's grace and aſſiſtance, we muſt work out our own Salvation in the careful uſe of all thoſe means which God hath appointed to that end. That excellent degree of goodneſs which men would have to fit them for the Sacrament, is not to be had but by the uſe of it. And therefore it is a prepoſterous thing for men to inſiſt upon having the end before they will uſe the means that may further them in the obtaining of it.

2. The total want of a due preparation, not only in the degree but in the main and ſubſtance of it, though it render us unfit at preſent to receive this Sacrament, yet does it by no means excuſe our neglect of it. One fault may draw on another, but can never excuſe it. It is our great fault that we are wholly unprepared, and no man can claim any benefit by his fault, or plead it in excuſe or extenuation of this neglect. A total want of preparation and an abſolute unworthineſs is Impenitenency in an evil courſe, a reſolution to continue a bad man, not to quit his luſts and to break off that wicked courſe he hath lived in: But is this any excuſe for the neglect of our duty that we will not fit our ſelves for the doing of it with benefit and advantage to our ſelves? A father commands his ſon to ask him bleſſing every day, and is ready to give it him; but ſo long as he is undutifull to him in his other actions, and lives in open diſobedience, forbids him to come in his ſight. He excuſeth himſelf from asking his father bleſſing, becauſe he is undutiful in other things, and reſolves to continue ſo. This is juſt the caſe of neglecting the duty God requires, and the bleſſings he offers to us in the Sacrament, becauſe we have made our ſelves incapable of ſo performing the one as to receive the other; and are reſolved to continue ſo. We will not do our duty

in other things, and then plead that we are unfit and unworthy to do it in this particular of the Sacrament.

3. The proper Inference and concluſion from a total want of due preparation for the Sacrament is not to caſt off all thoughts of receiving it, but immediately to ſet about the work of preparation, that ſo we may be fit to receive it. For if this be true, that they who are abſolutely unprepared ought not to receive the Sacrament, nor can do it with any benefit; nay by doing it in ſuch a manner render their condition much worſe, this is a moſt forcible argument to repentance and amendment of life: There is nothing reaſonable in this caſe but immediately to reſolve upon a better courſe, that ſo we may be meet partakers of thoſe holy Myſteries, and may no longer provoke God's wrath againſt us by the wilful neglect of ſo great and neceſſary a duty of the Chriſtian Religion. And we do wilfully neglect it, ſo long as we do wilfully refuſe to fit and qualifie our ſelves for the due and worthy performance of it. Let us view the thing in a like caſe; A Pardon is graciouſly offered to a Rebel, he declines to accept it, and modeſtly excuſeth himſelf becauſe he is not worthy of it. And why is he not worthy? becauſe he reſolves to be a Rebel, and then his pardon will do him no good, but be an aggravation of his crime. Very true: and it will be no leſs an aggravation that he refuſeth it for ſuch a reaſon, and under a pretence of modeſty does the moſt imprudent thing in the world. This is juſt the caſe; and in this caſe there is but one thing reaſonable to be done, and that is, for a man to make himſelf capable of the benefit as ſoon as he can, and thankfully to accept of it: but to excuſe himſelf from accepting of the benefit offered, becauſe he is not worthy of it, nor fit for it, nor ever intends to be ſo, is as if a man ſhould deſire to be excuſed from being happy becauſe he is reſolved to play the fool and to be miſerable. So that whether our want of preparation be total, or only to ſome degree, it is every way unreaſonable: if it be in the degree only, it ought not to hinder us from receiving the Sacrament; if it be total, it ought to put us immediately upon removing the impediment, by making ſuch preparation as is neceſſary to the due and worthy receiving of it. And this brings me to the

IV. *Fourth* and laſt thing I propoſed, *viz.* What preparation of our ſelves is neceſſary in order to the worthy receiving of this Sacrament. Which I told you would give me occaſion to explain the *Apoſtle's* meaning in the laſt part of the *Text*, *But let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.* I think it very clear from the occaſion and circumſtances of the *Apoſtle's* diſcourſe concerning the Sacrament that he does not intend the examination of our ſtate, whether we be Chriſtians or not, and ſincerely reſolved to continue ſo; and conſequently that he does not here ſpeak of our habitual preparation by the reſolution of a good life. This he takes for granted, that they were Chriſtians and reſolved to continue and perſevere in their Chriſtian profeſſion: But he ſpeaks of their actual fitneſs and worthineſs at that time when they came to receive the Lord's Supper. And for the clearing of this matter, we muſt conſider what it was that gave occaſion to this diſcourſe. At the 20th *verſe* of this *Chapter* he ſharply reproves their irreverent and unſutable carriage at the Lord's Supper. They came to it very diſorderly, *one before another.* It was the cuſtom of Chriſtians to meet at their *Feaſt of Charity*, in which they did communicate with great ſobriety and temperance; and when that was ended they celebrated the Sacrament of the Lord's ſupper. Now among the *Corinthians* this order was broken: The rich met and excluded the poor from this common Feaſt. And after an irregular Feaſt (one before another eating his own ſupper as he came)

came) they went to the Sacrament in great diſorder; *one was hungry* having eaten nothing at all; *others were drunk*, having eaten intemperately; and the poor were deſpiſed and neglected. This the *Apoſtle* condemns as a great profanation of that ſolemn Inſtitution of the Sacrament; at the participation whereof they behaved themſelves with as little reverence as if they had been met at a common ſupper or feaſt. And this he calls *not diſcerning the Lord's body*, making no difference in their behaviour between the Sacrament and a common meal: which irreverent and contemptuous carriage of theirs he calls *eating and drinking unworthily*: for which he pronounceth them *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, which were repreſented and commemorated in their *eating of that bread and drinking of that cup*. By which irreverent and contemptuous uſage of the Body and Blood of our Lord, he tells them that they did incur the judgment of God; which he calls *eating and drinking their own judgment*. For that the word κρίμα, which our *Tranſlatours* render *damnation*, does not here ſignifie eternal condemnation, but a temporal judgmention and chaſtiſement in order to the prevention of eternal condemnation is evident from what follows; *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himſelf*: And then he ſays, *For this cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep*: that is, for this irreverence of theirs God hath ſent among them ſeveral diſeaſes, of which many had died. And then he adds, *For if we would judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged. If we would judge our ſelves*; whether this be meant of the publick Cenſures of the Church, or our private cenſuring of our ſelves in order to our future amendment and reformation, is not certain. If of the latter, which I think moſt probable, then *judging* here is much the ſame with *examining our ſelves*, *v.* 28. And then the *Apoſtle's* meaning is, that if we would cenſure and examine our ſelves, ſo as to be more carefull for the future, we ſhould eſcape the judgment of God in theſe temporal puniſhments. *But when we are judged, we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world. But when we are judged*; that is, when by neglecting thus to judge our ſelves we provoke God to judge us; *we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the world*; that is, he inflicts theſe temporal judgments upon us to prevent our eternal condemnation. Which plainly ſhews, that the judgment here ſpoken of is not eternal condemnation. And then he concludes, *Wherefore, my Brethren, when ye come together to eat tarry for one another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together unto judgment*: where the *Apoſtle* plainly ſhews both what was the crime of unworthy receiving, and the puniſhment of it. Their crime was, their irreverent and diſorderly participation of the Sacrament; and their puniſhment was, thoſe temporal judgments which God inflicted upon them for this their contempt of the Sacrament.

Now this being, I think, very plain; we are proportionably to underſtand the precept of examination of our ſelves *before we eat of that bread and drink of that cup*. *But let a man examine himſelf*; that is, conſider well with himſelf what a ſacred Action he is going about, and what behaviour becomes him when he is celebrating this Sacrament inſtituted by our Lord in memorial of his body and blood, that is, of his death and paſſion: And if heretofore he have been guilty of any diſorder and irreverence (ſuch as the *Apoſtle* here taxeth them withall) let him cenſure and *judge himſelf* for it, be ſenſible of and ſorry for his fault, and be careful to avoid it for the future; and having thus *examined himſelf, let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*. This, I think, is the plain ſenſe of the *Apoſtle's* Diſcourſe; and that if we attend to the ſcope and circumſtances of it, it cannnot well have any other meaning.

But ſome will ſay, Is this all the preparation that is required to our worthy receiving of the Sacrament, that we take care not to come drunk to it, nor to be guilty of any irreverence and diſorder in the celebration of it? I anſwer in ſhort, this was the particular unworthineſs with which the *Apoſtle* taxeth the *Corinthians*; and which he warns them to amend, as they deſire to eſcape the judgments of God, ſuch as they had already felt for this irreverent carriage of theirs, ſo unſutable to the holy Sacrament: He finds no other fault with them at preſent in this matter, though any other ſort of irreverence will proportionably expoſe men to the like puniſhment. He ſays nothing here of their habitual preparation, by the ſincere purpoſe and reſolution of a good life anſwerable to the rules of the Chriſtian Religion: This we may ſuppoſe he took for granted. However, it concerns the Sacrament no more than it does Prayer or any other religious duty. Not but that it is very true that none but thoſe who do heartily embrace the Chriſtian Religion and are ſincerely reſolved to frame their lives according to the holy rules and precepts of it, are fit to communicate in this ſolemn acknowledgment and profeſſion of it. So that it is a practice very much to be countenanced and encouraged, becauſe it is of great uſe, for Chriſtians by way of preparation for the Sacrament to examine themſelves in a larger ſenſe than in all probability the *Apoſtle* here intended: I mean, to examine our paſt lives and the actions of them in order to a ſincere repentance of all our errours and miſcarriages, and to fix us in the ſteady purpoſe and reſolution of a better life; particularly, when we expect to have the forgiveneſs of our ſins ſealed to us, we ſhould lay aſide all enmity and thoughts of revenge, and heartily forgive thoſe that have offended us, and put in practice that univerſal love and charity which is repreſented to us by this holy Communion. And to this purpoſe we are earneſtly exhorted in the publick *Office* of the *Communion* by way of due preparation and diſpoſition for it, *to repent us truly of our ſins paſt, to amend our lives, and to be in perfect charity with all men, that ſo we may be meet partakers of thoſe holy Myſteries.*

And becauſe this work of examining our ſelves concerning our ſtate and condition, and of exerciſing repentance towards God and charity towards men is incumbent upon us as we are Chriſtians, and can never be put in practice more ſeaſonably and with greater advantage than when we are meditating of this Sacrament, therefore beſides our habitual preparation by repentance and the conſtant endeavours of a holy life, it is a very pious and commendable cuſtom in Chriſtians before their coming to the Sacrament to ſet apart ſome particular time for this work of examination. But how much time every perſon ſhould allot to this purpoſe is matter of prudence; and as it need not, ſo neither indeed can it be preciſely determined. Some have greater reaſon to ſpend more time upon this work than others; I mean thoſe whoſe accounts are heavier, becauſe they have long run upon the ſcore and neglected themſelves: And ſome alſo have more leiſure and freedom for it, by reaſon of their eaſie condition and circumſtances in the world: and therefore are obliged to allow a greater portion of Time for the exerciſes of piety and devotion. In general, no man ought to do a work of ſo great moment and concernment ſlightly and perfunctorily. And in this, as in all other actions, the end is principally to be regarded. Now the end of examining our ſelves is to underſtand our ſtate and condition, and to reform whatever we find amiſs in our ſelves. And provided this end be obtained, the circumſtances of the means are leſs conſiderable: whether more or leſs time be allowed to this work it matters not ſo much, as to make ſure that the work be throughly done.

And I do on purpoſe ſpeak thus cautiouſly in this matter, becauſe ſome pious perſons do perhaps err on the ſtricter hand, and are a little ſuperſtitious on that ſide; inſomuch that unleſs they can gain ſo much time to ſet apart for a ſolemn preparation, they will refrain from the Sacrament at that time; though otherwiſe they be habitually prepared. This I doubt not proceeds from a pious mind; but as the *Apoſtle* ſays in another caſe about the Sacrament, *ſhall I praiſe them in this? I praiſe them not.* For, provided there be no wilful neglect of due preparation, it is much better to come ſo prepared as we can, nay I think it is our duty ſo to doe, rather than to abſtain upon this *punctilio.* For when all is done, the beſt preparation for the Sacrament is the general care and endeavour of a good life: And he that is thus prepared may receive at any time when opportunity is offered, though he had no particular fore-ſight of that opportunity. And I think in that caſe ſuch a one ſhall do much better to receive than to refrain; becauſe he is habitually prepared for the Sacrament, though he had no time to make ſuch actual preparation as he deſired. And if this were not allowable how could Miniſters communicate with ſick perſons at all times, or perſwade others to do it many times upon very ſhort and ſudden warning?

And indeed we cannot imagine that the Primitive Chriſtians, who received the Sacrament ſo frequently that for ought appears to the contrary they judged it as eſſential and neceſſary a part of their publick worſhip as any other part of it whatſoever, even as their Hymns and Prayers, and reading and interpreting the Word of God: I ſay, we cannot well conceive how they who celebrated it ſo conſtantly, could allot any more time for a ſolemn preparation for it, than they did for any other part of divine worſhip: And conſequently, that the *Apoſtle* when he bids the *Corinthians* examine themſelves could mean no more than that conſidering the nature and ends of this Inſtitution they ſhould come to it with great reverence; and reflecting upon their former miſcarriages in this matter, ſhould be careful upon his admonition to avoid them for the future and to amend what had been amiſs: which to do, requires rather reſolution and care than any long time of preparation.

I ſpeak this, that devout perſons may not be intangled in an apprehenſion of a greater neceſſity than really there is of a long and ſolemn preparation every time they receive the Sacrament. The great neceſſity that lies upon men is to live as becomes Chriſtians, and then they can never be abſolutely unprepared. Nay, I think this to be a very good preparation; and I ſee not why men ſhould not be very well ſatisfied with it, unleſs they intend to make the ſame uſe of the Sacrament that many of the Papiſts do of Confeſſion and Abſolution, which is to quit with God once or twice a year, that ſo they may begin to ſin again upon a new ſcore.

But becauſe the Examination of our ſelves is a thing ſo very uſeful, and the time which men are wont to ſet apart for their preparation for the Sacrament is ſo advantageous an opportunity for the practice of it; therefore I cannot but very much commend thoſe who take this occaſion to ſearch and try their ways, and to call themſelves to a more ſolemn account of their actions. Becauſe this ought to be done ſometime, and I know no fitter time for it than this. And perhaps ſome would never find time to recollect themſelves and to take the condition of their Souls into ſerious conſideration, were it not upon this ſolemn occaſion.

The ſumm of what I have ſaid is this, that ſuppoſing a perſon to be habitually prepared by a religious diſpoſition of mind and the general courſe of a good life, this more ſolemn actual preparation is not always neceſſary: And it is better when there is an opportunity to receive without it, than not to receive at all. But the greater our actual preparation is, the better. For no man can examine himſelf too often, and underſtand the ſtate of his ſoul too well, and exerciſe repentance, and renew the reſolutions of a good life too frequently. And there is perhaps no fitter opportunity for the doing of all this, than when we approach the Lord's table, there to commemorate his death, and to renew our Covenant with him to live as becomes the Goſpel.

All the Reflection I ſhall now make upon this Diſcourſe, ſhall be from the conſideration of what hath been ſaid earneſtly to excite all that profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians to a due preparation of themſelves for this holy Sacrament, and a frequent participation of it according to the intention of our Lord and Saviour in the inſtitution of it, and the undoubted practice of Chriſtians in the primitive and beſt Times, when men had more devotion and fewer ſcruples about their duty.

If we do in good earneſt believe that this Sacrament was inſtituted by our Lord in remembrance of his dying love, we cannot but have a very high value and eſteem for it upon that account. Methinks ſo often as we read in the inſtitution of it thoſe words of our dear Lord, *do this in remembrance of me*, and conſider what he who ſaid them did for us, this dying charge of our beſt friend ſhould ſtick with us and make a ſtrong impreſſion upon our minds: Epeſcially if we add to theſe, thoſe other words of his, not long before his death, *Greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend; ye are my friends if ye do whatſoever I command you.* It is a wonderful love which he hath expreſſed to us, and worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance, And all that he expects from us, by way of thankful acknowledgmeent, is to celebrate the remembrance of it by the frequent participation of this bleſſed Sacrament. And ſhall this charge, laid upon us by him who laid down his life for us, lay no obligation upon us to the ſolemn remembrance of that unparallel'd kindneſs which is the fountain of ſo many bleſſings and benefits to us? It is a ſign we have no great ſenſe of the benefit when we are ſo unmindful of our benefactor as to forget him days without number. The Obligation he hath laid upon us is ſo vaſtly great, not only beyond all requital but beyond all expreſſion, that if he had commanded us ſome very grievous thing we ought with all the readineſs and chearfulneſs in the world to have done it; how much more when he hath impoſed upon us ſo eaſie a commandment, a thing of no burthen but of immenſe benefit? when he hath only ſaid to us, *Eat O friends, and drink O beloved*? when he only invites us to his table, to the beſt and moſt delicious Feaſt that we can partake of on this ſide heaven?

If we ſeriouſly believe the great bleſſings which are there exhibited to us and ready to be conferred upon us, we ſhould be ſo far from neglecting them, that we ſhould heartily thank God for every opportunity he offers to us of being made partakers of ſuch benefits. When ſuch a price is put into our hands, ſhall we want hearts to make uſe of it? Methinks we ſhould long with *David* (who ſaw but a ſhadow of theſe bleſſings) to be ſatisfied with the good things of God's houſe, and to draw near his altar; and ſhould cry out with him, *O when ſhall I come and appear before thee! My ſoul longeth, yea even fainteth for the courts of the Lord, and my fleſh cryeth out for the living God.* And if we had a juſt eſteem of things, we ſhould account it the greateſt infelicity and judgment in the world to be debarred of this privilege, which yet we do deliberately and frequently deprive our ſelves of.

We exclaim againſt the Church of *Rome* with great impatience, and with a very juſt indignation, for robbing the People of half of this bleſſed Sacrament,

ment, and taking from them the *cup of bleſſing*, *the cup of ſalvation*: and yet we can patiently endure for ſome months, nay years, to exclude our ſelves wholly from it. If no ſuch great benefits and bleſſings belong to it, why do we complain of them for hindring us of any part of it? But if there do, why do we by our own neglect deprive our ſelves of the whole.

In vain do we bemoan the decay of our graces and our ſlow progreſs and improvement in Chriſtianity, whilſt we wilfully deſpiſe the beſt means of our growth in goodneſs. Well do we deſerve that God ſhould ſend leanneſs into our ſouls, and make them to conſume and pine away in perpetual doubting and trouble, if, when God himſelf doth ſpread ſo bountiful a Table for us and ſet before us the bread of life, we will not come and feed upon it with joy and thankfulneſs.

SER-

SERMON XXVI.

A DISCOURSE AGAINST Tranſubſtantiation.

Concerning the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, one of the two great poſitive Inſtitutions of the Chriſtian Religion, there are two main Points of difference between *Us* and the Church of *Rome*. *One*, about the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; in which they think, but are not certain, that they have the Scripture and the words of our Saviour on their ſide: The *other*, about the adminiſtration of this Sacrament to the People in both kinds; in which we are ſure that we have the Scripture and our Saviour's Inſtitution on our ſide; and that ſo plainly that our Adverſaries themſelves do not deny it.

Of the *firſt* of theſe I ſhall now treat, and endeavour to ſhew againſt the Church of *Rome*, *That in this Sacrament, there is no ſubſtantial change made of the Elements of Bread and Wine into the natural Body and Blood of Chriſt*; that *Body* which was born of the *Virgin Mary*, and ſuffered upon the Croſs; for ſo they explain that hard word *Tranſubſtantiation*.

Before I engage in this Argument, I cannot but obſerve what an unreaſonable task we are put upon, by the bold confidence of our Adverſaries, to diſpute a matter of Senſe; which is one of thoſe things about which *Ariſtotle* hath long ſince pronounced there ought to be no diſpute.

It might well ſeem ſtrange if any man ſhould write a Book, to prove that an *Egg* is not an *Elephant*, and that a *Musket-bullet* is not a *Pike*: It is every whit as hard a caſe, to be put to maintain by a long Diſcourſe, that what we ſee and handle and taſte to be *Bread is Bread*, and not the *Body of a man*; and what we ſee and taſte to be *Wine* is *Wine*, and not *Blood*: And if this evidence may not paſs for ſufficient without any farther proof, I do not ſee why any man, that hath confidence enough to do ſo, may not deny any thing to be what all the World ſees it is; or affirm any thing to be what all the World ſees it is not; and this without all poſſibility of being farther confuted. So that the buſineſs of *Tranſubſtantiation* is not a controverſie of Scripture againſt Scripture, or of Reaſon againſt Reaſon, but of downright Impudence againſt the plain meaning of Scripture, and all the Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind.

It is a moſt Self-evident Falſhood; and there is no Doctrine or Propoſition in the World that is of it ſelf more evidently true, than *Tranſubſtantiation* is evidently falſe: And yet if it were poſſible to be true, it would be the moſt ill-natured and pernicious truth in the World, becauſe it would ſuffer nothing elſe to be true; it is like the *Roman Catholick* Church, which will needs be the whole Chriſtian Church, and will allow no other Society of Chriſtians to be any part of it: So *Tranſubſtantiation*, if it be true at all, it is all truth, and nothing elſe is true; for it cannot be true unleſs our Senſes, and the Senſes of all mankind be deceived about their proper objects; and if this be true and certain, then nothing elſe can be ſo; for if we be not certain of what we ſee, we can be certain of nothing.

And yet notwithſtanding all this, there are a company of men in the World ſo abandon'd and given up by God to the efficacy of deluſion as in good earneſt to believe this groſs and palpable Errour, and to impoſe the belief of it upon the Chriſtian World under no leſs penalties than of temporal death and eternal damnation. And therefore to undeceive, if poſſible, theſe deluded Souls, it will be neceſſary to examine the pretended grounds of ſo falſe a doctrine, and to lay open the monſtrous abſurdity of it.

And in the handling of this Argument, I ſhall proceed in this plain method.

I. I ſhall conſider the pretended grounds and reaſons of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine.

II. I ſhall produce our *Objections* againſt *it*. And if I can ſhew that there is no tolerable ground for it, and that there are invincible Objections againſt it, then every man is not only in reaſon excuſed from believing this Doctrine, but hath great cauſe to believe the contrary.

I. FIRST, I will conſider the pretended grounds and reaſons of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine. Which muſt be one or more of theſe *five*. Either 1*ſt*. The Authority of Scripture. Or 2*ly*. The perpetual belief of this Doctrine in the Chriſtian Church, as an evidence that they always underſtood and interpreted our Saviour's words, *This is my body*, in this ſenſe. Or 3*ly*. The Authority of the preſent Church to make and declare new Articles of Faith. Or 4*ly*. The abſolute neceſſity of ſuch as change this in the Sacrament to the comfort and benefit of thoſe who receive this Sacrament. Or 5*ly*. To magnifie the power of the Prieſt in being able to work ſo great a Miracle.

1*ſt*. They pretend for this Doctrine the Authority of Scripture in thoſe words of our Saviour, *This is my body*. Now to ſhew the inſufficiency of this pretence, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe *two* things.

1. That there is no neceſſity of underſtanding thoſe words of our Saviour in the ſenſe of *Tranſubſtantiation*.

2. That there is a great deal of reaſon, nay that it is very abſurd and unreaſonable, to underſtand them otherwiſe.

Firſt, that there is no neceſſity to underſtand thoſe words of our Saviour in the ſenſe of *Tranſubſtantiation*. If there be any, it muſt be from one of theſe two reaſons. Either becauſe there are no figurative expreſſions in Scripture, which I think no man ever yet ſaid: or elſe, becauſe a Sacrament admits of no figures; which would be very abſurd for any man to ſay, ſince it is of the very nature of a Sacrament to repreſent and exhibit ſome inviſible grace and benefit by an outward ſign and figure: And eſpecially ſince it cannot be denied, but that in the inſtitution of this very Sacrament our Saviour uſeth figurative expreſſions, and ſeveral words which cannot be taken ſtrictly and literally. When he gave the Cup he ſaid, *This Cup is the new Teſtament in my blood, which is ſhed for you and for many for the remiſſion of Sins.* Where firſt, the *Cup* is put for the *Wine* contained in the Cup; or elſe if the words be literally taken, ſo as to ſignifie a ſubſtantial change, it is not of the *Wine*, but of the *Cup*; and that, not into the *blood of Chriſt* but into the *new Teſtament* or *new Covenant* in his blood. Beſides, that his blood is ſaid *then* to be ſhed, and his body to be broken, which was not till his Paſſion, which followed the inſtitution and firſt celebration of this Sacrament.

But that there is no neceſſity to underſtand our Saviour's words in the ſenſe of *Tranſubſtantiation*, I will take the plain conceſſion of a great number of the moſt learned Writers of the Church of *Rome* in this Controverſie. (a) *Bellarmine*, (b) *Suarez* and (c) *Vaſquez* do acknowledge *Scotus* the great *Schoolman* to have ſaid that this Doctrine cannot be evidently proved from Scripture: And *Bellarmine* grants this not to be improbable; and *Suarez* and *Vaſquez* acknowledge (d) *Durandus* to have ſaid as much. (e) *Ocham* another famous Schoolman, ſays expreſly, that *the Doctrine which holds the ſubſtance of the Bread and Wine to remain after conſecration is neither repugnant to Reaſon nor to Scripture.* (f) *Petrus ab Alliaco* Cardinal of *Cambray* ſays plainly, that *the Doctrine of the Subſtance of Bread and Wine remaining after Conſecration is more eaſie and free from abſurdity, more rational, and no ways repugnant to the authority of Scripture*; nay more, that for the other Doctrine, *viz.* of *Tranſubſtantiation*, *there is no evidence in Scripture.* (g) *Gabriel Biel*, another great Schoolman and divine of their Church, freely declares, that *as to any thing expreſt in the Canon of the Scriptures, a man may believe that the ſubſtance of Bread and Wine doth remain after Conſecration*: and therefore he reſolves the belief of *Tranſubſtantiation* into ſome other Revelation, beſides Scripture, which he ſuppoſeth the Church had about it. Cardinal (h) *Cajetan* confeſſeth that *the Goſpel doth no where expreſs that the Bread is changed into the Body of Chriſt*; *that we have this from the authority of the Church*: nay, he goes farther, *that there is nothing in the Goſpel which enforceth any man to underſtand theſe words of Chriſt*, this is my body, *in a proper and not in a metaphorical ſenſe*; *but the Church having underſtood them in a proper ſenſe they are to be ſo explained*: Which words in the *Roman* Edition of *Cajetan* are expunged by order of Pope (i) *Pius* V. Cardinal (k) *Contarenus*, and (l) *Melchior Canus* one of the beſt and moſt judicious Writers that Church ever had, reckon this Doctrine among thoſe *which are not ſo expreſly found in Scripture.* I will add but one more of great authority in the Church, and a reputed Martyr, (m) *Fiſher* Biſhop of *Rocheſter* who ingeniouſly confeſſeth that in the words of the Inſtitution *there is not one word from whence the true preſence of the fleſh and blood of Chriſt in our Maſs can be proved*: So that we need not much contend that this Doctrine hath no certain foundation in Scripture, when this is ſo fully and frankly acknowleged by our Adverſaries themſelves.

(a) *de Euch l.* 3. *c.* 23.
(b) *in* 3 *diſ* 49. *Qu.* 75 *Sect.*2.
(c) *in* 3. *part diſp.* 180. Qu. 75. *art.* 2. *c.* 15.
(d) *in Sent. l.*4. *diſt.*11. Qu.1. *n.*15.
(e) *in* 4. *Sent. Q.* 5. *& Quodl.*4. *Q.* 3.
(f) *in* 4. *Sent. Q.* 6. *art.* 2.
(g) *in canon Miſſ. Lect.* 40.
(h) *in Aquin.* 3. *part. Qu.* 75. *art.* 1.
(i) *Ægid. Conink. de Sacram. Q.* 75. *art.* 1. *n.* 13.
(k) *de Sacram. l.* 2. *c.* 3.
(l) *Loc. Theolog. l.* 3. *c.* 3.
(m) *contra captiv. Babylon. c.* 10 *n.* 2.

Secondly, If there be no neceſſity of underſtanding our Saviour's words in the ſenſe of *Tranſuſtantiation*, I am ſure there is a great deal of reaſon to underſtand them otherwiſe. Whether we conſider the like expreſſions in Scripture; as where our Saviour ſays he is *the door* and *the true Vine* (which the Church of *Rome* would mightily have triumph'd in, had it been ſaid, *this is my true body.*) And ſo likewiſe where the Church is ſaid to be *Chriſt's body*; and the *Rock which* followed the *Iſraelites* to be *Chriſt*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 4. *They drank of that Rock which followed them*, and *that Rock was Chriſt*: All which and innumerable more like expreſſions in Scripture every man underſtands in a figurative, and not in a ſtrictly literal and abſurd ſenſe. And it is very well known, that in the *Hebrew* Language things are commonly ſaid to be that which they do ſignifie and repreſent; and there is not in that Language a more proper and uſual way of expreſſing a thing to ſignifie ſo and ſo, than to ſay that it is ſo and ſo. Thus *Joſeph* expounding *Pharoah*'s dream to him, *Gen.* 41. 26. ſays, *the ſeven good kine are ſeven years*, and *the ſeven good ears of corn are ſeven years*, that is, they ſignified or repreſented ſeven years of plenty; and ſo *Pharoah* underſtood him, and ſo would any man of ſenſe underſtand the like expreſſions; nor do I believe that any ſenſible man who had never heard of *Tranſubſtantiation* being grounded upon theſe words of our Saviour, *this is my body*, would upon reading the Inſtitution of the Sacrament in the Goſpel ever have imagin'd any ſuch thing to be meant by our Saviour in thoſe words; but would have underſtood his meaning to have been *this Bread* ſignifies my *Body*, this *Cup* ſignifies my *Blood*; and this which you ſee me now do, do ye hereafter for a *Memorial* of me: But ſurely it would never have entred into any man's mind to have thought that our Saviour did literally hold himſelf in his hand, and give away himſelf from himſelf with his own hands. Or whether we compare theſe words of our Saviour with the ancient Form of the Paſſover uſed by the *Jews* from *Ezra*'s time, *as* (n) *Juſtin Martyr* tells us, τοῦτο τὸ πάσχα ὁ σωτὴρ ἡμῶν ϗ ἡ καταφυγὴ ἡμῶν, *this Paſſover is our Saviour and our refuge*: not that they believed the Paſchal Lamb to be ſubſtantially changed either into God their Saviour who delivered them out of the Land of *Egypt*, or into the *Meſſias* the Saviour whom they expected and who was ſignified by it: But this Lamb which they did eat did repreſent to them and put them in mind of that ſalvation which God wrought for their Fathers in *Egypt*, when by the ſlaying of a Lamb and ſprinkling the blood of it upon their doors their firſt-born were paſſed over and ſpared; and did likewiſe foreſhew the Salvation of the *Meſſias*, *the Lamb of God that was to take away the Sins of the world.*

And nothing is more common in all Languages than to give the name of the thing ſignified to the Sign. As the delivery of a Deed or Writing under Hand and Seal is call'd a conveyance or making over of ſuch an Eſtate, and it is really ſo; not the delivery of mere wax and parchment, but the conveyance of a real Eſtate, as truly and really to all effects and purpoſes of Law, as if the very material houſes and lands themſelves could be and were actually delivered into my hands: In like manner the names of the things themſelves made over to us in the new Covenant of the Goſpel between God and man, are given to the Signs or Seals of that Covenant. By *Baptiſm* Chriſtians are ſaid to be *made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt*, *Heb.* 6. 4. And by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper we are ſaid to *communicate* or to be made partakers *of the Body of Chriſt* which was broken, and of his *Blood* which was ſhed for us, that is, of the real benefits of his death and paſſion. And thus St. *Paul* ſpeaks of this Sacrament, 1 *Cor.* 10. 16. *The cup of bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the Communion of the blood of Chriſt? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Chriſt?* But ſtill it is bread, and he ſtill calls it ſo; v. 17. *For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are partakers of that one bread.* The Church of *Rome* might, if they pleaſed, as well argue from hence that all Chriſtians are ſubſtantially changed firſt into Bread, and and then into the natural Body of Chriſt by their participation of the Sacrament, becauſe they are ſaid thereby to be *one bread and one body*. And the ſame Apoſtle in the next *Chapter*, after he had ſpoken of the conſecration of the Elements ſtill calls them the *Bread and the Cup*, in three *verſes* together, *As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup*, v. 26. *Whoſoever ſhall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily*, v. 27. *But let a man examine him-*

ſelf,

(n) *Dialog. cum Tryph.* p. 297. *Edit.* Pariſ. 1639.

ſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup, v. 28. And our Saviour himſelf when he had ſaid, *this is my blood of the new Teſtament*, immediately adds, * *but I ſay unto you, I will not henceforth drink of this fruit of the Vine, untill I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom*, that is, not till after his reſurrection, which was the firſt ſtep of his exaltation into the Kingdom given him by his Father, when the Scripture tells us he did eat and drink with his Diſciples. But that which I obſerve from our Saviour's words is, that after the conſecration of the *Cup* and the delivering of it to his Diſciples to drink of it, he tells them that he would thenceforth drink no more of that fruit of the Vine, which he had now drank with them, till after his Reſurrection. From whence it is plain that it was the fruit of the Vine, real Wine, which our Saviour drank of and communicated to his Diſciples in the Sacrament.

* Matth. 26. 29.

Beſides, if we conſider that he celebrated this Sacrament before his Paſſion, it is impoſſible theſe words ſhould be underſtood literally of the natural body and blood of Chriſt; becauſe it was *his body broken* and *his blood ſhed* which he gave to his Diſciples, which if we underſtand literally of his natural body broken and his blood ſhed, then theſe words, *this is my body which is broken, and this is my blood which is ſhed*, could not be true, becauſe his body was then whole and unbroken, and his blood not then ſhed; nor could it be a *propitiatory Sacrifice* (as they affirm this Sacrament to be) unleſs they will ſay that propitiation was made before Chriſt ſuffer'd: And it is likewiſe impoſſible that the Diſciples ſhould underſtand theſe words literally, becauſe they not only plainly ſaw that what he gave them was *Bread* and *Wine*, but they ſaw likewiſe as plainly that it was not his Body which was given, but his Body which gave that which was given; not his body *broken* and his blood *ſhed*, becauſe they ſaw him alive at that very time and beheld his body whole and unpierc'd; and therefore they could not underſtand theſe words literally: If they did, can we imagine that the Diſciples, who upon all other occaſions were ſo full of queſtions and objections, ſhould make no difficulty of this matter? nor ſo much as ask our Saviour, *how* can theſe things be? that they ſhould not tell him, we ſee this to be Bread and that to be Wine, and we ſee thy Body to be diſtinct from both; we ſee thy Body not broken, and thy Blood not ſhed.

From all which it muſt needs be very evident, to any man that will impartially conſider things, how little reaſon there is to underſtand thoſe words of our Saviour, *this is my body*, and *this is my blood*, in the ſenſe of *Tranſubſtantiation*; nay, on the contrary, that there is very great reaſon and an evident neceſſity to underſtand them otherwiſe. I proceed to ſhew,

2*ly*. That this Doctrine is not grounded upon the *perpetual belief of the Chriſtian Church*, which the Church of *Rome* vainly pretends as an evidence that the Church did always underſtand and interpret our Saviour's words in this ſenſe.

To manifeſt the groundleſneſs of this pretence, I ſhall, 1. ſhew by plain teſtimony of the *Fathers* in ſeveral Ages, that this Doctrine was not the belief of the ancient Chriſtian Church. 2. I ſhall ſhew the time and occaſion of its coming in, and by what degrees it grew up and was eſtabliſh'd in the *Roman* Church. 3. I ſhall anſwer their great pretended Demonſtration that this always was and muſt have been the conſtant belief of the Chriſtian Church.

1. I ſhall ſhew by plain Teſtimonies of the *Fathers* in ſeveral Ages, for above five hundred years after Chriſt, that this Doctrine was not the *belief of the ancient Chriſtian Church*. I deny not but that the *Fathers* do, and that with great reaſon, very much magnifie the wonderful myſtery and

efficacy of this Sacrament, and frequently ſpeak of a great Supernaturral change made by the divine benediction; which we alſo readily acknowledge. They ſay indeed, that the Elements of Bread and Wine do by the divine bleſſings become to us the Body and Blood of Chriſt: But they likewiſe ſay that the names of the things ſignified are given to the Signs that the Bread and Wine do ſtill remain in their proper nature and ſubſtance, and that they are turn'd into the ſubſtance of our Bodies; that the Body of Chriſt in the Sacrament is not his natural Body, but the ſign and figure of it; not that Body which was crucified, nor that Blood which was ſhed upon the Croſs; and that it is impious to underſtand the *eating of the fleſh of the Son of man* and *drinking his blood* literally; all which are directly oppoſite to the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* and utterly inconſiſtent with it. I will ſelect but ſome few Teſtimonies of many things which I might bring to this purpoſe.

I begin with *Juſtin Martyr*, who ſays expreſly, that * *our Blood* and *Fleſh are nouriſhed* by the converſion *of that food* which we receive in the *Euchariſt*: But *that* cannot be the natural body and blood of Chriſt, for no man will ſay that *that* is converted into the nouriſhment of our bodies.

* *Apol.* 2. *p.* 98. *Edit.* Pariſ. 1636

The *Second* is † *Irenæus*, who ſpeaking of this Sacrament ſays, that *the bread which is from the earth receiving the divine invocation is now no longer common bread, but the Euchariſt* (or Sacrament) *conſiſting of two things, the one earthly, the other heavenly.* He ſays it is no longer common bread, but after invocation or conſecration it becomes the Sacrament, that is, bread ſanctified, conſiſting of two things an earthly and a heavenly; the earthly thing is bread, and the heavenly is the divine bleſſing which by the invocation or conſecration is added to it. And * elſewhere he hath this paſſage, *when therefore the cup that is mix'd* (that is, of Wine and Water) *and the bread that is broken receives the word of God, it becomes the Euchariſt of the blood and body of Chriſt, of which the ſubſtance of our fleſh is increaſed and conſiſts*; but if that which we receive in the Sacrament do nouriſh our bodies, it muſt be bread and wine, and not the natural body and blood of Chriſt. There is another remarkable teſtimony of *Irenæus*, which though it be not now extant in thoſe *works* of his which remain, yet hath been preſerv'd by * *Oecumenius*, and it is this: when (ſays he) *the Greeks had taken ſome Servants, of the Chriſtian Catechumeni* (that is, ſuch as had not been admitted to the Sacrament) *and afterwards urged them by violence to tell them ſome of the ſecrets of the Chriſtians, theſe ſervants having nothing to ſay that might gratify thoſe who offered violence to them, except only that they had heard from their Maſters that the divine Communion was the blood and body of Chriſt, they thinking that it was really blood and fleſh, declar'd as much to thoſe that queſtioned them. The Greeks taking this as if it were really done by the Chriſtians, diſcovered it to others of the Greeks; who hereupon put* Sanctus *and* Blandina *to the torture to make them confeſs it.* To whom *Blandina* boldly anſwered, *How could they endure to do this, who by way of exerciſe* (or abſtinence) *do not not eat that fleſh which may lawfully be eaten?* By which it appears that this which they would have charg'd upon *Chriſtians*, as if they had litterally eaten the fleſh and blood of Chriſt in the Sacrament, was a falſe accuſation which theſe Martyrs denied, ſaying they were ſo far from that that they for their part did not eat any fleſh at all.

† *Lib.* 4. *c.* 34.

* *Lib.* 5. *c.* 28.

* Comment. *in* 1 Pet. *c.* 3.

The next is *Tertullian*, who proves againſt *Marcion* the Heretick that the Body of our Saviour was not a mere phantaſm and appearance, but a real Body, becauſe the Sacrament is a figure and image of his Body; and if there be an image of his body he muſt have a real body, otherwiſe the Sacrament would be an image of an image. His words are theſe, * *The bread which our Saviour took and diſtributed to his Diſciples he made his own body, ſaying this is*

- *Adverſ.* Marcionem. *l.* 4 *p.* 571. *Edit.* Rigal. Pariſ. 1634.

is my body, that is, the image or figure of my body. But it could not have been the figure of his body, if there had not been a true and real body. And arguing againſt the *Scepticks* who denied the certainty of ſenſe he uſeth this Argument: That if we queſtion our ſenſes we may doubt whether our Bleſſed Saviour were not deceived in what he heard, and ſaw, and touched. [†] *He might* (ſays he) *be deceived in the voice from heaven, in the ſmell of the ointment with which he was anointed againſt his burial, and in the taſte of the wine which he conſecrated in Remembrance of his blood.* So that it ſeems we are to truſt our ſenſes, even in the matter of the Sacrament: and if that be true, the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* is certainly falſe.

Origen in his [*] Comment on *Matth.* 15. ſpeaking of the Sacrament hath this Paſſage, *That food which is ſanctified by the word of God and prayer, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the belly and is caſt out into the draught*, which none ſurely will ſay of the Body of Chriſt. And afterwards he adds by way of explication, *it is not the matter of the bread, but the words which are ſpoken over it, which profiteth him that worthily eateth the Lord: and this* (he ſays) *he had ſpoken concerning the Typical and Symbolical body.* So that the matter of bread remaineth in the Sacrament, and this *Origen* calls the *Typical* and *Symbolical* body of Chriſt; and it is not the natural body of Chriſt which is there eaten, for the food eaten in the Sacrament, as to that of it which is material, goeth into the belly and is caſt out into the draught. This Teſtimony is ſo very plain in the Cauſe that *Sextus Senenſis* ſuſpects this place of *Origen* was depraved by the Hereticks. *Cardinal Perron* is contented to allow it to be *Origen's*, but rejects his Teſtimony becauſe he was accuſed of Hereſie by ſome of the Fathers, and ſays he talks like a Heretick in this place. So that with much ado this teſtimony is yielded to us. The ſame *Father* in his [*] *Homilies* upon *Leviticus* ſpeaks thus, *There is alſo in the new Teſtament a letter which kills him who doth not Spiritually underſtand thoſe things which are ſaid; for if we take according to the Letter that which is ſaid, EXCEPT YE EAT MY FLESH AND DRINK MY BLOOD, this Letter kills.* And this alſo is a killing Teſtimony, and not to be anſwered but in Cardinal *Perron*'s way, by ſaying *he talks like a Heretick.*

St. *Cyprian* hath a whole Epiſtle [*] to *Cecilius*, againſt thoſe who gave the Communion in Water only without Wine mingled with it; and his main argument againſt them is this, that *the blood of Chriſt with which we are redeemed and quickned cannot ſeem to be in the Cup when there is no Wine in the Cup by which the Blood of Chriſt is repreſented:* and afterwards he ſays, that *contrary to the Evangelical and Apoſtolical Doctrine water was in ſome places* offer'd (or *given*) *in the Lord's Cup, which* (ſays he) *alone cannot expreſs* (or repreſent) *the blood of Chriſt.* And laſtly he tells us, that *by Water* the people is underſtood, *by Wine the Blood of Chriſt is ſhewn* (or repreſented) *but when in the Cup water is mingled with Wine the people is united to Chriſt.* So that according to this Argument *Wine* in the Sacramental *Cup* is no otherwiſe changed into the *Blood of Chriſt than the Water* mixed with it is changed into the *People*, which are ſaid to be *united to Chriſt.*

I omit many others, and paſs to St. *Auſtin* in the *fourth Age* after Chriſt. And I the rather inſiſt upon his Teſtimony, becauſe of his eminent eſteem and authority in the *Latin* Church; and he alſo calls the *Elements* of the Sacrament the *figure and ſign of Chriſt's body and blood.* In his Book againſt *Adamantus* the *Manichee* we have this expreſſion, [*] *Our Lord did not doubt to ſay, this is my Body when he gave the Sign of his Body.* And in his explication of the third *Pſalm*, ſpeaking of *Judas* whom our Lord admitted to *his* laſt Supper, *in which* (ſays he) [†] *he commended and delivered to*

[†] *Lib. de Anima, p.* 319.

[*] Edit. Huetii.

[*] *Cap.* 10.

[*] *Ep.* 63.

[*] Aug. *Tom.* 6. *p.* 187. *Edit.* Baſil. 1596.

[†] *Enarrat. in* Pſal. *Tom.* 8. *p* 16.

his Diſciples the figure of his Body; Language which would now be cenſured for Hereſie in the Church of *Rome*. Indeed he was never *accus'd of Hereſie*, as Cardinal *Perron* ſays *Origen* was, but *he talks as like* one as *Origen* himſelf. And in his *Comment* on the 98. *Pſalm* ſpeaking of the offence which the Diſciples took at that ſaying of our Saviour, *Except ye eat the fleſh of the Son of man and drink his blood, &c.* he brings in our Saviour ſpeaking thus to them, † *Ye muſt underſtand Spiritually, what I have ſaid unto you ; ye are not to eat this body which ye ſee, and to drink that blood which ſhall be ſhed by thoſe that ſhall crucifie me. I have commended a certain Sacrament to you, which being Spiritually underſtood will give you life.* What more oppoſite to the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*, than that the Diſciples were not to eat that Body of Chriſt which they ſaw, nor to drink that blood which was ſhed upon the Croſs, but that all this was to be underſtood ſpiritually and according to the nature of a Sacrament ? for *that body* he tells us is not here but in heaven, in his Comment upon theſe words, *Me ye have not always.* * *He ſpeaks* (ſays he) *of the preſence of his body : ye ſhall have me according to my providence, according to Majeſty and inviſible grace: but according to the fleſh which the word aſſumed, according to that which was born of the Virgin* Mary, *ye ſhall not have me : therefore becauſe he converſed with his Diſciples forty days, he is aſcended up into heaven, and is not here.*

In his 23*d*. Epiſtle ; † *If the Sacrament* (ſays he) *had not ſome reſemblance of thoſe things whereof they are Sacraments, they would not be Sacraments at all: but from this reſemblauce they take for the moſt part the names of the things which they repreſent. Therefore as the Sacrament of the body of Chriſt is in ſome manner or ſenſe Chriſt's body, and the Sacrament of his blood is the blood of Chriſt ; So the Sacrament of faith (* meaning *Baptiſm) is faith.* Upon which words of St. *Auſtin* there is this remarkable *Gloſs* in their own *Canon Law* ; * *The heavenly Sacrament which truly repreſents the fleſh of Chriſt is called the body of Chriſt ; but improperly : whence it is ſaid, that after a manner, but not according to the truth of the thing but the Myſtery of the thing ſignified ; So that the meaning is, it is called the body of Chriſt, that is, it ſignifies the body of Chriſt :* And if this be St. *Auſtin*'s meaning, I am ſure no *Proteſtant* can ſpeak more plainly againſt *Tranſubſtantiation*. And in the ancient *Canon* of the *Maſs*, before it was chang'd in complyance with this new Doctrine, it is expreſly call'd *a Sacrament, a Sign, an Image and a Figure of Chriſt's body.* To which I will add that remarkable paſſage of St. *Auſtin* cited by * *Gratian, That as we receive the ſimilitude of his death in Baptiſm, ſo we may alſo receive the likeneſs of his fleſh and blood, that ſo neither may truth be wanting in the Sacrament, nor Pagans have occaſion to make us ridiculous for drinking the blood of one that was ſlain.*

I will mention but one Teſtimony more of this *Father*, but ſo clear a one as it is impoſſible any man in his wits that had believed *Tranſubſtantiation* could have utter'd. It is in his *Treatiſe* * *de doctrina Chriſtiana* ; where laying down ſeveral Rules for the right underſtanding of Scripture, he gives this for one. If (ſays he) *the ſpeech be a precept forbidding ſome heinous wickedneſs or crime, or commanding us to do good, it is not figurative; but if it ſeem to command any heinous wickedneſs or crime, or to forbid that which is profitable and beneficial to others, it is figurative. For example, Except ye eat the fleſh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you : This ſeems to command a heinous wickedneſs and crime, therefore it is a figure ; commanding us to communicate of the paſſion of our Lord, and with delight and advantage to lay up in our memory that his fleſh was crucified and wounded for us.* So that, according to St. *Auſtin*'s beſt skill in interpreting Scripture, the *literal eating* of the fleſh of Chriſt and drinking his blood would have been a great impiety; and therefore the expreſſion is to be underſtood *figuratively*; not as Cardinal *Perron* would have it, only in oppoſition to the eating of his fleſh and blood in the groſs appearance of fleſh and blood, but to the real eating of his natural body and blood under any appearance whatſoever: For St. *Auſtin* doth not ſay, this is a Figurative ſpeech wherein we are commanded really to feed upon the natural body and blood of Chriſt under the *ſpecies* of bread and wine, as the *Cardinal* would underſtand him; for then the ſpeech would be literal and not figurative: But he ſays, this is a figurative ſpeech wherein we are commanded Spiritually to feed upon the remembrance of his Paſſion.

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† *Id. Tom.* 9. p. 1105.

* *Id. Tract.* 50. *in Johan.*

† *Id. Tom.* 2. p. 93.

* *De Conſecrat. diſt.* 2. *Hoc eſt.*

* *De Conſecrat. diſt.* 2. *Sect. Utrum.*

* *Lib.* 3. *Tom.* 3. p. 53.

To theſe I will add but *three* or *four* Teſtimonies more in the *two* following Ages.

The firſt ſhall be of *Theodoret*, who ſpeaking of that * Prophecy of *Jacob* concerning our Saviour, *he waſhed his garments in Wine and his clothes in the blood of grapes*, hath theſe words, † *as we call the myſtical fruit of the Vine* (that is, the Wine in the Sacrament) *after conſecration the blood of the Lord, ſo he* (viz. *Jacob*) *calls the blood of the true Vine* (*viz. of* Chriſt) *the blood of the grape*: but the blood of Chriſt is not literally and properly but only figuratively the blood of the grape, in the ſame ſenſe as he is ſaid to be the true Vine; and therefore the Wine in the Sacrament after conſecration is in like manner not literally and properly but figuratively the blood of Chriſt. And he explains this afterwards, ſaying, that *our Saviour changed the names, and gave to his Body the name of the Symbol or Sign, and to the Symbol or Sign the name of his Body? thus when he had call'd himſelf the Vine, he call'd the Symbol or Sign his blood*; ſo that in the ſame ſenſe that he call'd himſelf the Vine, he call'd the Wine, which is the Symbol of his blood, his blood: *For*, ſays he, *he would have thoſe who partake of the divine myſteries not to attend to the nature of the things which are ſeen, but by the change of names to believe the change which is made by grace; for he who call'd that which by nature is a body wheat and bread, and again likewiſe call'd himſelf the Vine, he honour'd the Symbols with the name of his body and blood: not changing nature but adding grace to nature.* Where you ſee he ſays expreſly, that when he call'd the *Symbols* or Elements of the Sactament, *viz. Bread and Wine* his *Body and blood*, he made no change in the nature of the things, only added grace to nature, that is, by the Divine grace and bleſſing he raiſed them to a Spiritual and Supernatural virtue and efficacy.

The *Second* is of the ſame *Theodoret* in his ſecond Dialogue between a *Catholique*, under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and an *Heretique* under the name of *Eraniſtes*; who maintaining that the Humanity of Chriſt was chang'd into the ſubſtance of the Divinity (which was the Hereſie of *Eutychees*) he illuſtrates the matter by this Similitude. *As*, ſays he, *the Symbols of the Lord's body and blood are one thing before the invocation of the Prieſt, but after the invocation are changed and become another thing; So the body of our Lord after his aſcenſion is changed into the divine ſubſtance.* But what ſays the Catholique *Orthodoxus* to this? why, he talks juſt like one of Cardinal *Perron*'s Heretiques: *Thou art*, ſays he, *caught in thy own net; becauſe the myſtical Symbols after conſecration do not paſs out of their own nature: for they remain in their former ſubſtance, figure and appearance, and may be ſeen and handled even as before.* He does not only deny the outward figure and appearance of the Symbols to be chang'd, but the nature and ſubſtance of them, even in the proper and ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word ſubſtance; and it was neceſſary ſo to do, otherwiſe he had not given a pertinent anſwer to the ſimilitude urg'd againſt him.

* Gen. 49. 11.

† Dialog. 1.

The next is one of their own Popes, *Gelaſius*, who brings the ſame Inſtance againſt the *Eutychians*; * *Surely*, ſays he, *the Sacraments which we receive of the body and blood of our Lord are a divine thing, ſo that by them we are made partakers of a divine nature, and yet it ceaſeth not to be the ſubſtance or nature of Bread and Wine; and certainly the image and reſemblance of Chriſt's body and blood are celebrated in the action of the myſteries*, that is, in the Sacrament. To make this Inſtance of any force againſt the *Eutychians*, who held that the body of Chriſt upon his aſcenſion ceas'd and was chang'd into the ſubſtance of his Divinity, it was neceſſary to deny that there was any ſubſtantial change in the Sacrament of bread and wine into the body and blood of Chriſt. So that here is an infallible authority, one of their own Popes expreſly againſt *Tranſubſtantiation*.

* *Biblioth. Patr. Tom.* 4.

The laſt Teſtimony I ſhall produce is of *Facundus* an *African* Biſhop, who lived in the 6th Century. Upon occaſion of juſtifying an expreſſion of one who had ſaid that *Chriſt alſo received the adoption of Sons*, he reaſons thus. * *Chriſt vouchſafed to receive the Sacrament of adoption both when he was circumciſed and baptiſed: And the Sacrament of Adoption may be called adoption, as the Sacrament of his body and blood, which is in the conſecrated bread and cup, is by us called his body and blood: not that the bread*, ſays he, *is properly his body and the cup his blood, but becauſe they contain in them the myſteries of his body and blood; hence our Lord himſelf called the bleſſed bread and cup which he gave to his Diſciples his body and blood.* Can any Man after this believe, that it was then, and had ever been, the univerſal and received Doctrine of the Chriſtian Church, that the bread and wine in the Sacrament are ſubſtantially changed into the proper and natural body and blood of Chriſt?

* Facund. p. 144. *edit.* Pariſ. 1676

By theſe plain Teſtimonies which I have produced, and I might have brought a great many more to the ſame purpoſe, it is I think evident beyond all denial that *Tranſubſtantiation* hath not been *the perpetual belief of the Chriſtian Church*. And this likewiſe is acknowledged by many great and learned men of the *Roman Church*. (a) *Scotus* acknowledgeth that this Doctrine was not always thought neceſſary to be believed, but that the neceſſity of believing it was conſequent to that Declaration of the Church made in the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* the III. And (b) *Durandus* freely diſcovers his inclination *to have believed the contrary, if the Church had not by that determination obliged men to believe it.* (c) *Tonſtall* Biſhop of *Durham* alſo yields that *before the Lateran Council men were at liberty as to the manner of Chriſt's preſence in the Sacrament.* And (d) *Eraſmus*, who lived and died in the Communion of the *Roman* Church, and than whom no man was better read in the ancient *Fathers*, doth confeſs that it was *late before the Church defined Tranſubſtantiation, unknown to the Ancients both name and thing.* And (e) *Alphonſus a Caſtro* ſays plainly, that *concerning the Tranſubſtantiation of the bread into the body of Chriſt, there is ſeldom any mention in the ancient Writers.* And who can imagine that theſe learned men would have granted the ancient Church and Fathers to have been ſo much Strangers to this Doctrine, had they thought it to have been the perpetual belief of the Church? I ſhall now in the

(a) *In Sent. l.* 4. *Diſt.* 11. Q. 3.
(b) *In Sent. l.* 4. *diſt.* 11. *q.* 1. *n.* 15.
(c) *de Euchar. l.* 1. *p.* 146.
(d) *In* 1. *Epiſt. ad* Corinth. *c.* 7. *citante etiam* Salmerone, *Tom.* 9. *Tract.* 16. *p.* 108.
(e) *De Hæreſ. l.* 8.

Second place, give an account of the *particular time and occaſion of the coming in of this Doctrine*, and by what ſteps and degrees it grew up and was advanced into an *Article* of Faith in the *Romiſh Church*. The Doctrine of the *corporeal preſence of Chriſt* was firſt ſtarted upon occaſion of the Diſpute about the *Worſhip of Images*, in oppoſition whereto the *Synod* of *Conſtantinople* about the year DCCL did argue thus, That our Lord having left us no other image of himſelf but the Sacrament, in which the ſubſtance of bread is the image of his body, we ought to make no other image of our Lord. In anſwer to this Argument the ſecond *Council of Nice*, in the year DCCLXXXVII did declare, that the Sacrament after Conſecration *is not the image and antitype* of Chriſt's body and blood, but is *properly* his body and blood. So that the *corporeal preſence of the body of Chriſt in the Sacrament* was firſt brought *in to ſupport the ſtupid Worſhip of Images*: And indeed it could never have come in upon a more proper occaſion, nor have been applied to a fitter purpoſe.

And here I cannot but take notice how well this agrees with * *Bellarmine's* Obſervation, that *none of the Ancients who wrote of Hereſies, hath put this errour* (viz. of denying *Tranſubſtantiation*) *in his Catalogue; nor did any of the Ancients diſpute againſt this errour for the firſt 600 years.* Which is very true, becauſe there could be no occaſion then to diſpute againſt thoſe who denied *Tranſubſtantiation*, ſince, as I have ſhewn, this Doctrine was not in being, unleſs among the *Eutychian* Heretiques, for the firſt 600 years and more. But † *Bellarmine* goes on and tells us, that the *firſt who call'd in queſtion the truth of the body of the Lord in the Euchariſt were the ICONOMACHI* (the oppoſers of Images) *after the year* DCC *in the Council of* Conſtantinople; *for theſe ſaid there was one Image of Chriſt inſtituted by Chriſt himſelf,* viz. *the bread and wine in the Euchariſt, which repreſents the body and blood of Chriſt: Wherefore from that time the Greek Writers often admoniſh us that the Euchariſt is not the figure or image of the body of the Lord, but his true body, as appears from the* VII. *Synod*; which agrees moſt exactly with the account which I have given of the firſt riſe of this Doctrine, which began with the *corporeal preſence of Chriſt* in the Sacrament, and afterwards proceeded to *Tranſubſtantiation*.

And as this was the firſt occaſion of introducing this *Doctrine* among the *Greeks*, ſo in the *Latin or Roman* Church *Paſchaſius Radbertus*, firſt a *Monk*, and afterwards *Abbot* of *Corbey*, was the firſt broacher of it in the year DCCCXVIII.

And for this, beſides the Evidence of Hiſtory, we have the acknowledgment of *two* very Eminent Perſons in the Church of *Rome*, *Bellarmine* and *Sirmondus*, who do in effect confeſs that this *Paſchaſius* was the firſt who wrote to purpoſe upon this Argument. * *Bellarmine* in theſe words. *This Author was the firſt who hath ſeriouſly and copiouſly written concerning the truth of Chriſt's body and blood in the Euchariſt*: And † *Sirmondus* in theſe, *He ſo firſt explained the genuine ſenſe of the Catholick Church, that he opened the way to the reſt who afterwards in great numbers wrote upon the ſame Argument*: But though *Sirmondus* is pleaſed to ſay that he onely firſt explained the ſenſe of the Catholick Church in this Point, yet it is very plain from the Records of that Age which are left to us, that this was the firſt time that this Doctrine was broached in the *Latin* Church; and it met with great oppoſition in that Age, as I ſhall have occaſion hereafter to ſhew. For *Rabanus Maurus*, Arch-biſhop of *Mentz*, about the year DCCCXLVII. reciting the very words of *Paſchaſius* wherein he had delivered this Doctrine, hath this remarkable paſſage concerning the novelty of it; * *Some*, ſays he, *of late not having a right opinion concerning the Sacrament of the body and blood of our Lord, have ſaid that this is the body and blood of our Lord, which was born of the Virgin* Mary, *and in which our Lord ſuffered upon the Croſs and roſe from the dead: which errour*, ſays he, *we have oppoſed with all our might.* From whence it is plain, by the Teſtimony of one of the greateſt and moſt learned Biſhops of that Age, and of eminent reputation for Piety, that what is now the very Doctrine of the Church of *Rome* concerning the Sacrament, was then eſteemed an Error broach'd by ſome particular Perſons, but was far from being

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* *De Euchariſt* l. 1. c. 1.

† *Ibid.*

* *De Scriptor. Eccleſ*

† *In vita* Paſchaſii.

* *Epiſt. ad Heribaldum*, c. 33.

the generally receiv'd Doctrine of that Age. Can any one think it poſſible that ſo Eminent a Perſon in the Church both for Piety and Learning, could have condemn'd this Doctrine as an Errour and a Novelty, had it been the general Doctrine of the Chriſtian Church, not only in that but in all former Ages: and no cenſure paſs'd upon him for that which is now *the great burning Article* in the Church of *Rome*, and eſteemed by them one of the greateſt and moſt pernicious Hereſies?

Afterwards in the year MLIX, when *Berengarius* in *France* and *Germany* had rais'd a freſh oppoſition againſt this Doctrine, he was compell'd to recant it by Pope *Nicholas* and the *Council at Rome*, in theſe words, * *That the Bread and Wine which are ſet upon the Altar, after the Conſecration are not only the Sacrament, but the true body and blood of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and are ſenſibly, not only in the Sacrament, but in Truth, handled and broken by the hands of the Prieſt, and ground or bruiſed by the Teeth of the faithfull.* But it ſeems the *Pope* and his *Council* were not then skilful enough to expreſs themſelves rightly in this matter; for the *Gloſs* upon the *Canon Law* ſays expreſly, † *That unleſs we underſtand theſe words of BERENGARIUS* (that is in truth of the *Pope and his Council*) *in a ſound ſenſe, we ſhall fall into a greater Hereſie than that of BERENGARIUS; for we do not make parts of the Body of Chriſt.* The meaning of which *Gloſs* I cannot imagine, unleſs it be this, That the *Body of Chriſt*, though it be in truth *broken*, yet it is not *broken into parts*, (*for we do not make parts of the body of Chriſt*) but *into wholes*: Now this new way of *breaking a Body*, not into *parts* but into *wholes*, (which in good earneſt is the Doctrine of the Church of *Rome*) though to them that are able to believe *Tranſubſtantiation* it may for any thing I know appear to be *ſound ſenſe*, yet to us that cannot believe ſo, it appears to be *ſolid nonſenſe*.

* Gratian *de Conſecrat. diſtinct.* 2. Lanfranc. *de corp. &. ſang. Domini. c.* 5. Guitmund. *de Sacram.* Alger. *de Sacram. l.* 1. *c.* 19.

† *Gloſ. Decret. de conſecrat. diſt.* 2. *in cap. Ego Berengarius.*

About XX years after, in the year MLXXIX Pope *Gregory* the VII*th.* began to be ſenſible of this abſurdity; and therefore in another *Council* at *Rome* made *Berengarius* to recant in another *Form*, viz. * *That that bread and wine which are placed upon the Altar, are ſubſtantially changed into the true and proper and quickning fleſh and blood of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and after Conſecration are the true body of Chriſt, which was born of the Virgin, and which being offered for the Salvation of the World did hang upon the Croſs, and ſits at the right band of the Father.*

* *Waldenſ. Tom.* 2. *c.* 13.

So that from the firſt ſtarting of this Doctrine in the *ſecond Council of Nice* in the year DCCLXXXVII, till the *Council* under Pope *Gregory* the VII*th.* in the year MLXXIX, it was almoſt three hundred years that this Doctrine was conteſted, and before this miſhapen *Monſter of Tranſuſtantiation could be lick'd* into that Form in which it is now ſetled and eſtabliſh'd in the Church of *Rome*. Here then is a plain account of the firſt riſe of this Doctrine, and of the ſeveral ſteps whereby it was advanced by the Church of *Rome* into an *Article of Faith*. I come now in the

Third place, to anſwer the great pretended *Demonſtration* of the *impoſſibility that this Doctrine, if it had been new, ſhould ever have come in, in any Age, and been received in the Church; and conſequently it muſt of neceſſity have been the perpetual belief of the Church in all Ages*: For if it had not always been the Doctrine of the Church, whenever it had attempted firſt to come in there would have been a great ſtir and buſtle about it, and the whole Chriſtian World would have roſe up in oppoſition to it. But we can ſhew no ſuch time when firſt it came in, and when any ſuch oppoſition was made to it, and therefore it was always the Doctrine of the Church. This *Demonſtration* Monſieur *Arnauld*, a very learned Man in *France*, pretends to be unanſwerable:

able: whether it be ſo or not, I ſhall briefly examine. And,

Firſt, We do aſſign a punctual and very likely time of the firſt riſe of this Doctrine, about the beginning of the *ninth* Age; though it did not take firm root nor was fully ſetled and eſtabliſh'd till towards the end of the *eleventh*. And this was the moſt likely time of all other, from the beginning of Chriſtianity, for ſo groſs an Errour to appear; it being, by the confeſſion and conſent of their own *Hiſtorians*, the moſt dark and diſmal time that ever happened to the Chriſtian Church, both for *Ignorance*, and *Superſtition*, and *Vice*. It came in together with *Idolatry*, and was made uſe of to ſupport it: A fit prop and companion for it. And indeed what *tares* might not the Enemy have ſown in ſo ~~dark and~~ long a *Night*; when ſo conſiderable a part of the Chriſtian World was lull'd aſleep in profound Ignorance and Superſtition? And this agrees very well with the account which our *Saviour* himſelf gives in the *Parable* of the *Tares*, of the ſpringing up of Errours and Corruptions in the Field of the Church. * *While the men ſlept* the Enemy did his work in the Night, ſo that when they were awake they wondered how and whence the *tares* came; but being ſure they were there, and that they were not ſown at firſt, they concluded *the Enemy had done it*. * Matth. 13. 24.

Secondly, I have ſhewn likewiſe that there was *conſiderable oppoſition* made to this *Errour* at its firſt coming in. The general Ignorance and groſs Superſtition of that Age rendred the generality of people more quiet and ſecure, and diſpoſed them to receive any thing that came under a pretence of myſtery in Religion, and of greater reverence and devotion to the Sacrament, and that ſeemed any way to countenance the worſhip of *Images*, for which at that time they were zealouſly concern'd. But notwithſtanding the ſecurity and paſſive temper of the People, the men moſt eminent for piety and learning in that Time made great reſiſtance againſt it. I have already named *Rabanus* Arch-Biſhop of *Mentz*, who oppoſed it as an Errour lately ſprung up, and which had then gained but upon ſome few Perſons. To whom I may add *Heribaldus* Biſhop of *Auxerres* in *France*, *Io. Scotus*, *Erigena*, and *Ratramus*, commonly known by the name of *Bertram*, who at the ſame time were employed by the Emperour *Charles* the *Bald* to oppoſe this growing Errour, and wrote learnedly againſt it. And theſe were the eminent men for learning in that time. And becauſe Monſieur *Arnauld* will not be ſatisfied unleſs there were ſome ſtir and buſtle about it, *Bertram* in his *Preface* to his Book tells us, that they *who according to their ſeveral opinions talked differently about the myſtery of Chriſts body and blood were divided by no ſmall Schiſm*.

Thirdly, Though for a more clear and ſatisfactory anſwer to this pretended *Demonſtration* I have been contented to untie this knot, yet I could without all theſe pains have cut it. For ſuppoſe this Doctrine had ſilently come in and without oppoſition, ſo that we could not aſſign the particular time and occaſion of its firſt Riſe; yet if it be evident from the Records of former Ages, for above D. years together, that this was not the ancient belief of the Church; and plain alſo, that this Doctrine was afterwards received in the *Roman* Church, though we could not tell how and when it came in, yet it would be the wildeſt and moſt extravagant thing in the world to ſet up a pretended Demonſtration of Reaſon againſt plain Experience and matter of Fact. This is juſt *Zeno*'s Demonſtration of the impoſſibility of motion againſt *Diogenes* walking before his Eyes. For this is to undertake to prove that impoſſible to have been, which moſt certainly was. Juſt thus the *Servants* in the *Parable* might have demonſtrated that the *tares* were *wheat*, becauſe they were ſure none but good ſeed was ſown at firſt, and no man could give any account of the punctual time when any *tares* were ſown, or by whom: and if an Enemy had come to do it, he muſt needs have met with great reſiſtance and oppoſition; but no ſuch reſiſtance was made, and therefore there could be no *tares* in the *field*, but that which they call'd *tares* was certainly *good wheat*. At the ſame rate a man might demonſtrate that *our King*, his *Majeſty of Great Britain*, is not return'd into *England*, nor reſtor'd to his Crown; becauſe there being ſo great and powerfull an Army poſſeſs'd of his Lands, and therefore obliged by intereſt to keep him out, it was impoſſible he ſhould ever come in without a great deal of fighting and bloodſhed: but there was no ſuch thing, therefore he is not return'd and reſtor'd to his Crown. And by the like kind of Demonſtration one might prove that the *Turk* did not invade *Chriſtendom* laſt year, and beſiege *Vienna*; becauſe if he had, the moſt *Chriſtian King*, who had the greateſt Army in *Chriſtendom* in a readineſs, would certainly have employed it againſt him; but Monſieur *Arnauld* certainly knows no ſuch thing was done: And therefore according to his way of Demonſtration, the *matter of fact*, ſo commonly reported and believed, concerning the *Turk's Invaſion of Chriſtendom* and *beſieging Vienna* laſt year, was a perfect miſtake. But a man may demonſtrate till his head and heart ake, before he ſhall ever be able to prove that which certainly is, or was, never to have been. For of all ſorts of impoſſibles nothing is more evidently ſo, than to make that which hath been not to have been. All the reaſon in the world is too weak to cope with ſo tough and obſtinate a difficulty. And I have often wonder'd how a man of Monſieur *Arnauld's* great wit and ſharp Judgment could prevail with himſelf to engage in ſo bad and baffled a Cauſe; or could think to defend it with ſo *wooden a Dagger* as his *Demonſtration* of *Reaſon* againſt certain *Experience* and *matter of Fact*: A thing, if it be poſſible, of equal abſurdity with what he pretends to demonſtrate; *Tranſubſtantiation* it ſelf. I proceed to the

Third pretended Ground of this Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*; and that is, *The Infallible Authority of the preſent Church to make and declare new Articles of faith*. And this in truth is the ground into which the moſt of the learned men of the Church did heretofore, and many do ſtill reſolve their belief of this Doctrine: And, as I have already ſhewn, do plainly ſay that they ſee no ſufficient reaſon, either from *Scripture* or *Tradition*, for the belief of it: And that they ſhould have believed the contrary had not the determination of the Church obliged them otherwiſe.

But if this Doctrine be obtruded upon the world merely by virtue of the Authority of the *Roman* Church, and the Declaration of the *Council* under Pope *Gregory* the VII*th*. or of the *Lateran Council* under *Innocent* the III*d*. then it is a plain Innovation in the Chriſtian Doctrine, and a new Article of Faith impos'd upon the Chriſtian World. And if any Church hath this power, the Chriſtian Faith may be enlarged and changed as often as men pleaſe; and that which is no part of our Saviour's Doctrine, nay, any thing, though never ſo abſurd and unreaſonable, may become an Article of Faith obliging all Chriſtians to the belief of it, whenever the Church of *Rome* ſhall think fit to ſtamp her Authority upon it: which would make Chriſtianity a moſt uncertain and endleſs thing.

The *Fourth* pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *the neceſſity of ſuch a change as this in the Sacrament to the comfort and benefit of thoſe who receive it*. But there is no colour for this, if the thing be rightly conſider'd: Becauſe the comfort and benefit of the Sacrament depends upon the bleſſing annexed to the Inſtitution. And as *Water* in *Baptiſm*, without any ſubſtantial change made in that Element, may by the Divine bleſſing accompanying the Inſtitution be effectual to the waſhing away of Sin, and Spiritual Regeneration; So there can no reaſon in the world be given why the Elements of *Bread* and *Wine* in the *Lord's Supper* may not, by the ſame Divine bleſſing accompanying this Inſtitution, make the worthy receivers partakers of all the Spiritual comfort and benefit deſigned to us thereby without any ſubſtantial change made in thoſe Elements, ſince our Lord hath told us, that *verily the fleſh profiteth nothing.* So that if we could do ſo odd and ſtrange a thing as to eat the very natural fleſh and drink the blood of our Lord, I do not ſee of what greater advantage it would be to us than what we may have by partaking of the Symbols of his Body and blood as he hath appointed *in remembrance of him.* For the Spiritual efficacy of the Sacrament doth not depend upon the nature of the thing received, ſuppoſing we receive what our Lord appointed, and receive it with a right preparation and diſpoſition of mind, but upon the ſupernatural bleſſing that goes along with it, and makes it effectual to thoſe Spiritual ends for which it was appointed.

The *Fifth* and laſt pretended ground of this Doctrine is, *to magnifie the power of the Prieſt in being able to work ſo great a Miracle.* And this with great pride and Pomp is often urg'd by them as a tranſcendent inſtance of the Divine Wiſdom, to find out ſo admirable a way to raiſe the power and reverence of the Prieſt; that he ſhould be able every day, and as often as he pleaſes, by repeating a few words to work ſo miraculous a change, and (as they love moſt abſurdly and blaſphemouſly to ſpeak) *to make God himſelf.*

But this is to pretend to a power above that of God himſelf, for he did not, nor cannot make himſelf, nor do any thing that implies a contradiction, as *Tranſubſtantiation* evidently does in their pretending *to make God.* For to make that which already is, and to make that *now* which *always* was, is not only vain and trifling if it could be done, but impoſſible becauſe it implies a contradiction.

And what if after all *Tranſubſtantiation*, if it were poſſible and actually wrought by the Prieſt, would yet be no Miracle; For there are two things neceſſary to a Miracle; that there be a ſupernatural effect wrought, and that this effect be evident to ſenſe. So that though a ſupernatural effect be wrought, yet if it be not evident to ſenſe, it is to all the ends and purpoſes of a Miracle as if it were not; and can be no teſtimony or proof of any thing, becauſe it ſelf ſtands in need of another Miracle to give teſtimony to it, and to prove that it was wrought. And neither in Scripture, nor in prophane Authours, nor in common uſe of ſpeech, is any thing call'd a Miracle but what falls under the notice of our ſenſes: A *Miracle* being nothing elſe but *a ſupernatural effect evident to ſenſe*, the great end and deſign whereof is to be a ſenſible proof and conviction to us of ſomething that we do not ſee.

And for want of this Condition, *Tranſubſtantiation*, if it were true, would be no Miracle. It would indeed be very *ſupernatural*, but for all that it would not be a *Sign* or *Miracle*: For a Sign or Miracle is always a thing ſenſible, otherwiſe it could be no Sign. Now that ſuch a change as is pretended in *Tranſubſtantiation* ſhould really be wrought, and yet there ſhould be no ſign and appearance of it, is a thing very wonderful, but not to ſenſe; for our ſenſes perceive no change, the Bread and Wine in the Sacrament to all our ſenſes remaining juſt as they were before: And that a thing ſhould remain to all appearance juſt as it was, hath nothing at all of Wonder in it: we wonder indeed when we ſee a ſtrange thing done, but no man wonders when he ſees nothing done. So that *Tranſubſtantiation*, if they will needs have it a Miracle, is ſuch a Miracle as any man may work that hath but the confidence to face men down that he works it, and the fortune to be believed: And though the Church of *Rome* may magnifie their Prieſts upon account of this Miracle which they ſay they can work every day and every hour, yet I cannot underſtand the reaſon of it; for when this great work (as they call it) is done, there is nothing more appears to be done than if there were no Miracle: Now ſuch a Miracle as to all appearance is no Miracle, I ſee no reaſon why a Proteſtant Miniſter, as well as a Popiſh Prieſt, may not work as often as he pleaſes; or if he can but have the patience to let it alone, it will work it ſelf. For ſurely nothing in the world is eaſier than to let a thing be as it is, and by ſpeaking a few words over it to make it juſt what it was before. Every man, every day, may work ten thouſand ſuch Miracles.

And thus I have diſpatch'd the firſt part of my Diſcourſe, which was to conſider the pretended grounds and *Reaſons* of the Church of *Rome* for this Doctrine, and to ſhew the weakneſs and inſufficiency of them. I come in the

II. SECOND place, to produce our *Objections* againſt it. Which will be of ſo much the greater force, becauſe I have already ſhewn this Doctrine to be deſtitute of all Divine warrant and authority, and of any other ſort of Ground ſufficient in reaſon to juſtifie it. So that I do not now object againſt a Doctrine which hath a fair probability of Divine Revelation on its ſide, for that would weigh down all objections, which did not plainly overthrow the probability and credit of its Divine Revelation: But I object againſt a Doctrine by the mere Will and Tyranny of men impos'd upon the belief of Chriſtians, without *any* evidence of *Scripture*, and againſt all the evidence of *Reaſon* and *Senſe*.

The Objection I ſhall reduce to theſe *two* Heads. *Firſt*, The infinite ſcandal of this Doctrine to the Chriſtian Religion. And *Secondly*, The monſtrous and inſupportable abſurdity of it.

Firſt, *The infinite ſcandal of this Doctrine to the Chriſtian Religion.* And that upon theſe *four* accounts. 1. Of the ſtupidity of this Doctrine. 2. The real barbarouſneſs of this Sacrament and Rite of our Religion upon ſuppoſition of the truth of this Doctrine. 3. Of the cruel and bloody conſequences of it. 4. Of the danger of Idolatry; which they are certainly guilty of, if this Doctrine be not true. 1. Upon account of *the ſtupidity of this Doctrine.* I remember that *Tully*, who was a man of very good ſenſe, inſtanceth in the conceit of *eating God* as the extremity of madneſs, and ſo ſtupid an apprehenſion as he thought no man was ever guilty of. * *When we call*, ſays he, *the fruits of the earth Ceres, and wine Bacchus, we uſe but the common language; but do you think any man ſo mad as to believe that which he eats to be God?* It ſeems he could not believe that ſo extravagant a folly had ever entred into the mind of man. It is a very ſevere ſaying of *Averroes* the *Arabian* Philoſopher (who lived after this Doctrine was entertained among *Chriſtians*) and ought to make the Church of *Rome* bluſh, if ſhe can; *I have travell'd*, ſays he*, *over the World, and have found divers* Sects; *but ſo ſottiſh a* Sect *or Law I never found, as is the* Sect *of the* Chriſtians; *becauſe with their own teeth they devour their God whom they worſhip.* It was great ſtupidity in the People of *Iſrael* to ſay, *Come let us make us Gods*; but it was civilly ſaid of them, *Let us make us Gods that may go before us,* in compariſon of the Church of *Rome*, who ſay, *Let us make a God that we may eat him.* So that upon the whole matter I cannot but wonder that they ſhould chuſe thus to expoſe Faith to the contempt of all that are endued with Reaſon. And to ſpeak the plain truth, the Chriſtian Religion was never ſo horribly expoſed to the ſcorn of Atheiſts

* *De Nat. Deorum. l.* 3.

* Dionyſ. Carthuſ. *in* 4. *diſt.* 10. *art.* 1.

and Infidels, as it hath been by this moſt abſurd and ſenſeleſs Doctrine. But thus it was foretold that † *the Man of Sin* ſhould come *with Power and Signs and Lying Miracles, and with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs,* with all the *Legerdemain* and *jugling* tricks of falſhood and impoſture; amongſt which this of *Tranſubſtatiation,* which they call a *Miracle,* and we a *Cheat,* is one of the chief: And in all probability thoſe common *jugling* words of *hocus pocus,* are nothing elſe but a corruption of *hoc eſt corpus,* by way of ridiculous imitation of the Prieſts of the Church of *Rome* in their *trick* of *Tranſubſtantiation.* Into ſuch Contempt by this fooliſh Doctrine and pretended Miracle of theirs have they brought the moſt ſacred and venerable Myſtery of our Religion.

† 2 Theſſ. 2. 10.

2. It is very ſcandalous likewiſe upon account of the real *barbarouſneſs* of this Sacrament and Rite of our Religion, upon ſuppoſition of the truth of this Doctrine. Literally to *eat the fleſh of the Son of man and to drink his blood,* St. *Auſtin,* as I have ſhewed before, declares to be a great *Impiety.* And the impiety and barbarouſneſs of the thing is not in truth extenuated, but only the appearance of it, by its being done under the *Species of Bread and Wine*: For the thing they acknowledge is really done, and they believe that they verily eat and drink the natural fleſh and blood of Chriſt. And what can any man do more unworthily towards his Friend? How can he poſſibly uſe him more barbarouſly, than to feaſt upon his living fleſh and blood? It is one of the greateſt wonders in the world, that it ſhould ever enter into the minds of men to put upon our Saviour's words, ſo eaſily capable of a more convenient ſenſe, and ſo neceſſarily requiring it, a meaning ſo plainly contrary to Reaſon, and Senſe, and even to Humanity it ſelf. Had the ancient Chriſtians owned any ſuch Doctrine, we ſhould have heard of it from the Adverſaries of our Religion in every page of their Writings; and they would have deſired no greater advantage againſt the Chriſtians than to have been able to hit them in the teeth with their feaſting upon the natural fleſh and blood of their Lord, and their God, and their beſt Friend. What endleſs triumphs would they have made upon this Subject? And with what confidence would they have ſet cruelty uſed by Chriſtians in their *Sacrament,* againſt their god *Saturn*'s eating his own Children, and all the cruel and bloody Rites of their Idolatry? But that no ſuch thing was then objected by the *Heathens* to the *Chriſtians,* is to a wiſe man inſtead of a thouſand Demonſtrations that no ſuch Doctrine was then believed.

3. It is ſcandalous alſo upon account of the *cruel and bloody conſequences* of this Doctrine; ſo contrary to the plain Laws of Chriſtianity, and to one great end and deſign of this Sacrament, which is to unite Chriſtians in the moſt perfect love and charity to one another: Whereas this Doctrine hath been the occaſion of the moſt barbarous and bloody Tragedies that ever were acted in the World. For this hath been in the Church of *Rome* the great *burning Article*; and as abſurd and unreaſonable as it is, more Chriſtians have been murthered for the denial of it then perhaps for all the other Articles of their Religion. And I think it may generally paſs for a true obſervation, That all Sects are commonly moſt hot and furious for thoſe things for which there is leaſt reaſon; for what men want of Reaſon for their opinions, they uſually ſupply and make up in Rage. And it was no more than needed to uſe this ſeverity upon this occaſion; for nothing but the cruel fear of death could in probability have driven ſo great a part of mankind into the ackcowledgment of ſo unreaſonable and ſenſeleſs a Doctrine.

O Bleſſed Saviour! thou beſt Friend and greateſt Lover of mankind, who can imagine thou didſt ever intend that men ſhould kill one another for not being able to believe contrary to their ſenſes; for being unwilling to think, that thou ſhouldſt make one of the moſt horrid and barbarous things that can be imagin'd a main Duty and principal Myſtery of thy Religion; for not flattering the pride and preſumption of the Prieſt who ſays he can make God, and for not complying with the folly and ſtupidity of the People who are made to believe that they can eat him?

4. Upon account of the danger of *Idolatry*; which they are certainly guilty of if this Doctrine be not true, and ſuch a change as they pretend be not made in the Sacrament; for if it be not, then they worſhip a Creature inſtead of the Creatour God bleſſed for ever. But ſuch a change I have ſhewn to be impoſſible; or if it could be, yet they can never be certain that it is, and conſequently are always in danger of Idolatry; and that they can never be certain that ſuch a change is made, is evident; becauſe according to the expreſs determination of the Council of *Trent*, that depends upon the mind and *intention of the Prieſt*, which cannot certainly be known but by Revelation, which is not pretended in this caſe. And if they be miſtaken in this change, through the knavery or croſſneſs of the Prieſt who will not *make God* but when he thinks fit, they muſt not think to excuſe themſelves from Idolatry becauſe they intended to worſhip God and not a Creature; for ſo the *Perſians* might be excus'd from Idolatry in worſhipping the *Sun*, becauſe they intend to worſhip God and not a Creature; and ſo indeed we may excuſe all the Idolatry that ever was in the World, which is nothing elſe but a miſtake of the Deity, and upon that miſtake a worſhipping of ſomething as God which is not God.

II. Beſides the infinite ſcandal of this Doctrine upon the accounts I have mentioned, *the monſtrous abſurdities* of it make it inſupportable to any Religion. I am very well aſſur'd of the grounds of Religion in general, and of the Chriſtian Religion in particular; and yet I cannot ſee that the foundations of any revealed Religion, are ſtrong enough to bear the weight of ſo many and ſo great abſurdities as this Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* would load it withall. And to make this evident, I ſhall not inſiſt upon thoſe groſs contradictions, of the ſame Body being in ſo many ſeveral places at once; of our Saviour's giving away himſelf with his own hands to every one of his Diſciples, and yet ſtill keeping himſelf to himſelf; and a thouſand more of the like nature: but to ſhew the abſurdity of this Doctrine, I ſhall only ask theſe few Queſtions.

1. Whether any man have, or ever had greater evidence of the truth of any Divine Revelation than any man hath of the falſhood of *Tranſubſtantiation?* Infidelity were hardly poſſible to men, if all men had the ſame evidence for the Chriſtian Religion which they have againſt *Tranſubſtantiation*, that is, the clear and irreſiſtible evidence of ſenſe. He that can once be brought to contradict or deny his ſenſes, is at an end of certainty; for what can a man be certain of if he be not certain of what he ſees? In ſome circumſtances our ſenſes may deceive us, but no Faculty deceives us ſo little and ſo ſeldom: And when our ſenſes do deceive us, even that errour is not to be corrected without the help of our ſenſes.

2. Suppoſing this Doctrine had been delivered in Scripture in the very ſame words that it is decreed in the Council of *Trent*, by what clearer evidence or ſtronger Argument could any man prove to me that ſuch words

were in the Bible, than I can prove to him that bread and wine after conſecration are bread and wine ſtill? He could but appeal to my eyes to prove ſuch words to be in the Bible, and with the ſame reaſon and juſtice might I appeal to ſeveral of his ſenſes to prove to him that the bread and wine after conſecration are bread and wine ſtill.

3. Whether it be reaſonable to imagine that God ſhould make that a part of the Chriſtian Religion which ſhakes the main external evidence and confirmation of the whole? I mean the Miracles which were wrought by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, the aſſurance whereof did at firſt depend upon the certainty of ſenſe. For if the ſenſes of thoſe who ſay they ſaw them were deceived, then there might be no Miracles wrought; and conſequently it may juſtly be doubted whether that kind of confirmation which God hath given to the Chriſtian Religion would be ſtrong enough to prove it, ſuppoſing *Tranſubſtantiation* to be a part of it: Becauſe every man hath as great evidence that *Tranſubſtantiation* is falſe, as he hath that the Chriſtian Religion is true. Suppoſe then *Tranſubſtantiation* to be part of the Chriſtian Doctrine, it muſt have the ſame confirmation with the whole, and that is Miracles: But of all Doctrines in the world it is peculiarly incapable of being proved by a Miracle. For if a Miracle were wrought for the proof of it, the very ſame aſſurance which any man hath of the truth of the Miracle he hath of the falſhood of the Doctrine, that is, the clear evidence of his Senſes. For that there is a Miracle wrought to prove *that what he ſees in the Sacrament is not bread but the body of Chriſt*, there is only the evidence of ſenſe; and there is the very ſame evidence to prove *that what he ſees in the Sacrament is not the body of Chriſt but bread.* So that here would ariſe a new Controverſie, whether a man ſhould rather believe his Senſes giving teſtimony againſt the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*, or bearing witneſs to a Miracle wrought to confirm that Doctrine; there being the very ſame evidence againſt the truth of the Doctrine, which there is for the truth of the Miracle: And then the Argument for *Tranſubſtantiation* and the Objection againſt it would juſt ballance one another; and conſequently *Tranſubſtantiation* is not to be proved by a Miracle, becauſe that would be, *to prove to a man by ſomething that he ſees, that he doth not ſee what he ſees.* And if there were no other evidence that *Tranſubſtantiation* is no part of the Chriſtian Doctrine, this would be ſufficient, that what proves the one doth as much overthrow the other; and that Miracles which are certainly the beſt and higheſt external proof of Chriſtianity are the worſt proof in the world of *Tranſubſtantiation*, unleſs a man can renounce his ſenſes at the ſame time that he relies upon them: For a man cannot believe a Miracle without relying upon ſenſe, nor *Tranſubſtantiation* without renouncing it. So that never were any two things ſo ill coupled together as the Doctrine of Chriſtianity and that of *Tranſubſtantiation*, becauſe they draw ſeveral ways, and are ready to ſtrangle one another: For the main evidence of the Chriſtian Doctrine, which is Miracles, is reſolved into the certainty of ſenſe, but this evidence is clear and point-blank againſt *Tranſubſtantiation.*

4. And *Laſtly*, I would aſk what we are to think of the Argument which our Saviour uſed to convince his Diſciples after his Reſurrection that his Body was really riſen, and that they were not deluded by a Ghoſt or Apparition? Is it a neceſſary and concluſive Argument or not? * *And he ſaid unto* Luke 24. 38, 39. *them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts ariſe in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I my ſelf; for a Spirit hath not fleſh and bones, as ye ſee me have.* But now if we ſuppoſe with the Church of *Rome* the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* to be true, and that he had inſtructed his

Diſciples in it juſt before his death, ſtrange thoughts might juſtly have riſen in their hearts, and they might have ſaid to him; Lord, it is but a few days ago ſince thou didſt teach us not to believe our ſenſes, but directly contrary to what we ſaw, *viz.* that the bread which thou gaveſt us in the Sacrament, though we ſaw it and handled it and taſted it to be bread, yet was not bread, but thine own natural body; and now thou appealeſt to our ſenſes to prove that this is thy body which we now ſee. If ſeeing and handling be an unqueſtionable evidence that things are what they appear to our ſenſes, then we were deceived before in the Sacrament; and if they be not, then we are not ſure now that this is thy body which we now ſee and handle, but it may be perhaps bread under the appearance of fleſh and bones; juſt as in the Sacrament, that which we ſaw and handled and taſted to be bread was thy fleſh and bones under the form and appearance of bread. Now upon this ſuppoſition it would have been a hard matter to have quieted the thoughts of the Diſciples: For if the Argument which our Saviour uſed did certainly prove to them that what they ſaw and handled was his body, his very natural fleſh and bones, becauſe they ſaw and handled them, (which it were impious to deny) it would as ſtrongly prove that what they ſaw and received before in the Sacrament was not the natural body and blood of *Chriſt*, but real bread and wine: And conſequently, that according to our Saviour's arguing after his Reſurrection they had no reaſon to believe *Tranſubſtantiation* before. For that very Argument by which our Saviour proves the reality of his body after his Reſurrection doth as ſtrongly prove the reality of bread and wine after Conſecration. But our Saviour's Argument was moſt infallibly good and true, and therefore the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* is undoubtedly falſe.

Upon the whole matter I ſhall only ſay this, that ſome other Points between us and the Church of *Rome* are managed with ſome kind of wit and ſubtilty, but this of *Tranſubſtantiation* is carried out by mere dint of impudence and facing down of Mankind.

And of this the more diſcerning perſons of that Church are of late grown ſo ſenſible that they would now be glad to be rid of this odious and ridiculous Doctrine. But the Council of *Trent* hath rivetted it ſo faſt into their Religion, and made it ſo neceſſary and eſſential a Point of their belief, that they cannot now part with it if they would; it is like a Mill-ſtone hung about the neck of Popery, which will ſink it at the laſt.

And though ſome of their greateſt Wits, as Cardinal *Perron*, and of late Monſieur *Arnauld*, have undertaken the defence of it in great Volumes; yet it is an abſurdity of that monſtrous and maſſy weight, that no humane authority or wit are able to ſupport it: It will make the very Pillars of St. *Peter*'s crack, and requires more Volumes to make it good than would fill the *Vatican*.

And now I would apply my ſelf to the poor deluded People of that Church, if they were either permitted by their Prieſts, or durſt venture without their leave, to look into their Religion and to examine the Doctrines of it. *Conſider, and ſhew your ſelves men.* Do not ſuffer your ſelves any longer to be led blindfold, and by an implicit Faith in your Prieſts, into the belief of nonſenſe and contradiction. Think it enough and too much to let them rook you out of your money for pretended Pardons and counterfeit Reliques, but let not the Authority of any Prieſt or Church perſuade you out of your Senſes. Credulity is certainly a fault as well as Infidelity: and he who ſaid, *Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen and yet have believed*; hath no where ſaid, *Bleſſed are they that have ſeen and yet have not believed*; much leſs, *Bleſſed are they that believe directly contrary to what they ſee.*

To conclude this Diſcourſe. By what hath been ſaid upon this Argument it will appear, with how little truth, and reaſon, and regard to the intereſt of our common Chriſtianity, it is ſo often ſaid by our Adverſaries, that there are as good Arguments for the belief of *Tranſubſtantiation* as of the Doctrine of the *Trinity*: When they themſelves do acknowledge with us that the Doctrine of the *Trinity* is grounded upon the Scriptures, and that according to the interpretation of them by the conſent of the ancient Fathers: But their Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* I have plainly ſhewn to have no ſuch ground, and that this is acknowledged by very many learned men of their own Church. And this Doctrine of theirs being firſt plainly proved by us to be deſtitute of all Divine Warrant and Authority, our Objections againſt it from the manifold contradictions of it to Reaſon and Senſe are ſo many Demonſtrations of the falſhood of it. Againſt all which they have nothing to put in the oppoſite Scale but the Infallibility of their Church, for which there is even leſs colour of proof from Scripture than for *Tranſubſtantiation* it ſelf. But ſo fond are they of their own Innovations and Errours, that rather than the Dictates of their Church, how groundleſs and abſurd ſoever, ſhould be call'd in queſtion; rather than not have their will of us in impoſing upon us what they pleaſe, they will overthrow any Article of the Chriſtian Faith, and ſhake the very foundations of our common Religion: A clear evidence that the Church of *Rome* is not the true Mother, ſince ſhe can be ſo well contented that Chriſtianity ſhould be deſtroyed rather than the Point in queſtion ſhould be decided againſt her.

SERMON XXVII.

THE
Proteſtant Religion Vindicated,
From the Charge of
Singularity and Novelty.

Preached before the King at *Whitehall*, *April* 2. 1680.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.

Theſe are the words of *Joſhua*; who after he had brought the People of *Iſrael* through many difficulties and hazards into the quiet poſſeſſion of the promiſed land, like a good Prince and Father of his Country, was very ſolicitous, before his death, to lay the firmeſt foundation he could deviſe of the future happineſs and proſperity of that People in whoſe preſent ſettlement he had, by the bleſſing of God, been ſo ſucceſsful an inſtrument.

And becauſe he knew no means ſo effectual to this end, as to confirm them in the Religion and Worſhip of the true God, who had by ſo remarkable and miraculous a Providence planted them in that good Land; he ſummons the people together, and repreſents to them all thoſe conſiderations that might engage them and their poſterity for ever, to continue in the true Religion. He tells them what God had already done for them, and what he had promiſed to do more, if they would be faithful to him: And on the other hand, what fearful calamities he had threatned, and would certainly bring upon them, in caſe they ſhould tranſgreſs his Covenant, and go and ſerve other Gods. And after many Arguments to this purpoſe, he concludes with this earneſt Exhortation at the 14*th*. *verſe*, *Now therefore fear the Lord, and ſerve him in ſincerity and in truth, and put away the Gods which your fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt; and ſerve ye the Lord.*

And to give the greater weight and force to this Exhortation, he does by a very eloquent kind of inſinuation as it were once more ſet them at liberty, and leave them to their own election: It being the nature of man to ſtick more ſtedfaſtly to that which is not violently impoſed, but is our own free and deliberate choice: *And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.*

Which words offer to our conſideration theſe following obſervations.

1. *It is here ſuppoſed that a Nation muſt be of ſome Religion or other. Joſhua* does not put this to their choice, but takes it for granted.

2. *That though Religion be a matter of choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it ſelf, nor to a good Governour, what Religion his people are of. Joſhua* does not put it to them as if it were an indifferent matter whether they ſerved God or Idols; he had ſufficiently declared before which of theſe was to be preferred.

3. *The true Religion may have ſeveral prejudices and objections againſt it: If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord,* intimating that upon ſome accounts, and to ſome perſons, it may appear ſo.

4. *That the true Religion hath thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may ſafely be referr'd to any conſiderate man's choice.* And this ſeems to be the true Reaſon why *Joſhua* refers it to them: Not that he thought the thing indifferent, but becauſe he was fully ſatisfied that the truth and goodneſs of the one above the other was ſo evident, that there was no danger that any prudent man ſhould make a wrong choice, *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve*; intimating, that the plain difference of the things in competition would direct them what to chuſe.

5. *The Example of Princes and Governours hath a very great influence upon the people in matters of Religion.* This I collect from the Context: And *Joſhua* was ſenſible of it; and therefore though he firmly believed the true Religion to have thoſe advantages that would certainly recommend it to every impartial man's judgment, yet knowing that the multitude are eaſily impos'd upon and led into errour, he thought fit to encline and determine them by his own example, and by declaring his own peremptory reſolution in the caſe, *Chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve; as for me, I and my houſe will ſerve the Lord.* Laws are a good ſecurity to Religion; but the Example of Governours is a living Law, which ſecretly over-rules the minds of men, and bends them to a compliance with it.

> -------- *Non ſic inflectere ſenſus*
> *Humanos edicta valent, ut vita Regentis.*

The Lives and Actions of Princes have uſually a greater ſway upon the minds of the People than their Laws.

All theſe Obſervations are I think very natural, and very conſiderable. I ſhall not be able to ſpeak to them all; but ſhall proceed ſo far as the time and your patience will give me leave.

Firſt, *It is here ſuppoſed that a Nation muſt be of ſome Religion or other. Joſhua* does not put it to their choice whether they would worſhip any Deity at all. That had been too wild and extravagant a ſuppoſition, and which it is likely in thoſe days had never entred into any man's mind. But he takes it for granted that all people will be of ſome Religion; and then offers it to their conſideration which they would pitch upon, *Chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve, whether the Gods which your fathers ſerved,* &c.

Religion is a thing to which men are not only formed by education and cuſtom, but, as *Tully* ſays, *Quo omnes duce natura vehimur,* It is that to which we are all carried by a natural inclination; which is the true Reaſon why ſome Religion or other hath ſo univerſally prevailed in all Ages and places of the world.

The temporal felicity of men, and the ends of Goverment can very hardly, if at all, be attained without Religion. Take away this, and all Obligations of Conſcience ceaſe: and where there is no obligation of Conſcience, all ſecurity of Truth and Juſtice and mutual confidence among men is at an end. For why ſhould I repoſe confidence in that man, why ſhould I take his word, or believe his promiſe, or put any of my Intereſts and concernments into his power, who hath no other reſtraint upon him but that of humane Laws, and is at liberty in his own mind and principles to do whatever he judgeth to be expedient for his intereſt, provided he can but do it without danger to himſelf? So that declared Atheiſm and Infidelity doth juſtly bring men under a jealouſie and ſuſpicion with all mankind; and every wiſe man hath reaſon to be upon his guard againſt thoſe, from whom he hath no cauſe to expect more juſtice and truth and equity in their dealings than he can compell them to by the mere dint and force of Laws. For by declaring themſelves free from all other obligations they give us fair warning what we are to expect at their hands, and how far we may truſt them. Religion is the ſtrongeſt band of humane Society; and God ſo neceſſary to the welfare and happineſs of mankind, as it could not have been more, if we could ſuppoſe the Being of God himſelf to have been purpoſely deſigned and contrived for the benefit and advantage of men: So that very well may it be taken for granted, that a Nation muſt be of ſome Religion or other.

Secondly, *Though Religion be a matter of our choice, yet it is neither a thing indifferent in it ſelf, nor to a good Governour, what Religion his people are of.* Notwithſtanding the ſuppoſition of the Text, *Joſhua* doth not leave them at liberty whether they will ſerve God or Idols; But by a very Rhetorical Scheme of Speech endeavours to engage them more firmly to the worſhip of the true God.

To countenance and ſupport the true Religion, and to take care that the people be inſtructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and ſeduce men from it, properly belongs to the Civil Magiſtrate. This power the Kings of *Iſrael* always exerciſed, not only with allowance, but with great approbation and commendation from God himſelf. And the caſe is not altered ſince Chriſtianity: The better the Religion is, the better it deſerves the countenance and ſupport of the Civil Authority. And this Power of the Civil Magiſtrate in matters of Religion was never called in queſtion, but by the *Enthuſiaſts* of theſe latter times: And yet among theſe, every Father and Maſter of a Family claims this Power over his Children and ſervants, at the ſame time that they deny it to the Magiſtrate over his Subjects. But I would fain know where the difference lyes. Hath a Maſter of a Family more power over thoſe under his Government than the Magiſtrate hath? No man ever pretended it: Nay, ſo far is it from that, that the natural Authority of a Father may be, and often is, limited and reſtrained by the Laws of the Civil Magiſtrate. And why then may not a Magiſtrate exerciſe the ſame power over his Subjects in matters of Religion, which every Maſter challengeth to himſelf in his own Family, that is, to eſtabliſh the true worſhip of God in ſuch manner and with ſuch circumſtances as he thinks beſt, and to permit none to affront it, or to ſeduce from it thoſe that are under his care? And to prevent all miſunderſtandings in this matter, I do not hereby aſcribe any thing to the Magiſtrate that can poſſibly give him any pretence of right to reject God's true Religion, or to declare what he pleaſes to be ſo, and what Books he pleaſes to be *Canonical* and *the Word of God*; and conſequently to make a falſe Religion ſo currant by the ſtamp of his Authority, as to oblige his Subjects to the profeſſion of it: Becauſe he who acknowledgeth himſelf to derive all his Authority from God, can pretend to none againſt Him. But if a falſe Religion be eſtabliſhed by Law, the caſe here is the ſame as in all other Laws that are ſinful in the matter of them, but yet made by a lawfull Authority; in this caſe the Subject is not bound to profeſs a falſe Religion, but patiently to ſuffer for the conſtant profeſſion of the true.

And to ſpeak freely in this matter, I cannot think (till I be better inform'd, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of Conſcience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commiſſion'd, as the Apoſtles and firſt Publiſhers of the Goſpel were, and cannot juſtifie that Commiſſion by Miracles as they did, to affront the eſtabliſh'd Religion of a Nation (though it be falſe) and openly to draw men off from the profeſſion of it in contempt of the Magiſtrate and the Law: All that perſons of a different Religion can in ſuch a caſe reaſonably pretend to, is to enjoy the private liberty and exerciſe of their own Conſcience and Religion; For which they ought to be very thankfull, and to forbear the open making of Proſelytes to their own Religion, (thongh they be never ſo ſure that they are in the right) till they have either an extraordinary Commiſſion from God to that purpoſe, or the Providence of God make way for it by the permiſſion or connivance of the Magiſtrate. Not but that every man hath a *Right* to publiſh and propagate the true Religion, and to declare it againſt a falſe one; but there is no *Obligation* upon any man to attempt this to no purpoſe, and when without a miracle it can have no other effect but the loſs of his own life: unleſs he have an immediate Command and Commiſſion from God to this purpoſe, and be endued with a power of Miracles, as a publick Seal and Teſtimony of that Commiſſion, which was the caſe of the *Apoſtles*, who after they had received an immediate Commiſſion were not to enter upon the excution of it, but to *ſtay at Jeruſalem, till they were endued with power from on high.* In this caſe a man is to abide all hazards, and may reaſonably expect both extraordinary aſſiſtance and ſucceſs, as the Apoſtles had; and even a miraculous protection till his work be done; and after that, if he be call'd to ſuffer Martyrdom, a ſupernatural ſupport under thoſe ſufferings.

And that they are guilty however of groſs Hypocriſie who pretend a further obligation of Conſcience in this matter, I ſhall give this plain Demonſtration, which relies upon Conceſſions generally made on all hands, and by all Parties. No Proteſtant (that I know of) holds himſelf obliged to go and Preach up his Religion and make Converts in *Spain* or *Italy*: Nor do either the *Proteſtant* Miniſters or *Popiſh* Prieſts think themſelves bound in Conſcience to preach the Goſpel in *Turky*, and to confute the *Alchoran*, to convert the *Mahometans*. And what is the Reaſon? becauſe of the ſeverity of the Inquiſition in *Popiſh* Countreys, and of the Laws in *Turky*. But doth the danger then alter the obligation of Conſcience? No certainly; but it makes men throw off the falſe pretence and diſguiſe of it: But where there is a real obligation of Conſcience, danger ſhould not deter men from their Duty, as it did not the Apoſtles: which ſhews their caſe to be different from ours, and that probably this matter was ſtated right at firſt. So that whatever is pretended this is certain, that the *Prieſts* and *Jeſuites* of the Church of *Rome* have in truth no more obligation of Conſcience to make Converts here in *England* than in *Sweden* or *Turky*; where it ſeems the evident danger of the attempt hath for theſe many years given them a perfect diſcharge from their duty in this particular. I ſhall join the

Third and *Fourth* Obſervations together. That *though the true Religion may have ſeveral prejudices and objections againſt it, yet upon examination there will be found thoſe real advantages on its ſide, that it may ſafely be referred to any conſiderate man's choice: If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve. If it ſeem evil unto you*; Intimating, that to ſome perſons and upon ſome accounts it may appear ſo. But when the matter is truly repreſented, the choice is not difficult, nor requires any long deliberation, *Chuſe you* this day *whom you will ſerve.* Let but the Cauſe be fully and impartially heard, and a wiſe man may determine himſelf upon the ſpot, and give his Verdict without ever going from the Bar.

The true Religion hath always layen under ſome prejudices with partial and inconſiderate men; which commonly ſpring from one of theſe *two* Cauſes, either the *Prepoſſeſſions of a contrary Religion*, or the *contrariety of the true Religion to the vicious inclinations and practices of men,* which uſually lyes at the bottom of all prejudice againſt Religion. Religion is an enemy to mens beloved luſts, and therefore they are enemies to Religion. I begin with the *firſt*, which is as much as I ſhall be able to compaſs at this time.

I. *The Prepoſſeſſions of a falſe Religion*; which commonly pretends *two* advantages on its ſide, *Antiquity* and *Univerſality*; and is wont to object to the true Religion *Novelty* and *Singularity.* And *both* theſe are intimated both before and after the Text: *Put away the gods which your Fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, and in Egypt: And chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve, whether the gods which your Fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whoſe Land ye dwell.* Idolatry was the Religion of their Fathers, and had ſpread it ſelf over the greateſt and moſt ancient Nations of the World and the moſt famous for Learning and Arts, the *Chaldeans* and *Egyptians*; and was the Religion of the *Amorites* and the Nations round about them. So that *Joſhua* repreſents the *Heathen Religion* with all its ſtrength and advantage, and does not diſſemble its confident pretence to *Antiquity* and *Univerſality*, whereby they would alſo inſinuate the *Novelty* and *Singularity* of the worſhip of the God of *Iſrael.* And it is very well worthy our obſervation, that one or both of theſe have always been the Exceptions of falſe Religions (eſpecially of *Idolatry* and *Superſtition*) againſt the true Religion. The ancient Idolaters of the world pretended their Religion to be *ancient* and *univerſal*, that their Fathers ſerved theſe gods, and that the worſhip of the God of *Iſrael* was a plain Innovation upon the *Ancient* and *Catholick Religion* of the World, and that the very firſt riſe and original of it was within the memory of their Fathers; and no doubt they were almoſt perpetually upon the *Jews* with that pert queſtion, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* and telling them, that it was the Religion of a very ſmall part and corner of the World, confined within a little Territory: But the great Nations of the world, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, famous for all kind of knowledge and wiſdom, and indeed all the Nations round about them, worſhipped other Gods: And therefore it was an intolerable arrogance and ſingularity in them, to condemn their Fathers and all the world, to be of a Religion different from all other Nations, and hereby to ſeparate themſelves and make a *Schiſm* from the reſt of mankind.

And when the Goſpel appeared in the world, which the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* (to prevent the ſcandal of that word) calls *the time of Reformation*, the *Jews* and *Heathen* ſtill renewed the ſame Objections againſt Chriſtianity. The *Jews* urged againſt it, not the ancient *Scriptures* and the true Word of God, but that which they pretended to be of much greater Authority, the *unwritten* Word, the ancient and conſtant *Traditions* of their Church; and branded this new Religion with the name of Hereſie, *After the way* (ſaith St. *Paul*) *that you call Hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers; believing all things that are written in the Law, and in the Prophets:* By which we ſee, that they of the Church of *Rome* were not the firſt who called it *Hereſie* to reject humane Traditions, and to make the Scriptures the Rule of Faith: This was done long before by their Reverend Predeceſſors, the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*.

And the *Gentiles*, they pretended againſt it both *Antiquity* and *Univerſality*, the conſtant belief and practice of all Ages, and almoſt all Places of the World; *Sequimur majores noſtros qui feliciter ſecuti ſunt ſuos*, ſays *Symmachus*, *We follow our Forefathers, who happily followed theirs*; But you bring in a new Religion, never known nor heard of in the World before.

And when the Chriſtian Religion was moſt miſerably depraved and corrupted, in that diſmal night of Ignorance which over-ſpread theſe *Weſtern* Parts of the World about the *Ninth* and *Tenth Centuries*; and many pernicious Doctrines and Superſtitious Practices were introduced, to the woful defacing of the Chriſtian Religion, and making it quite another thing from what our Saviour had left it; and theſe Corruptions and Abuſes had continued for ſeveral Ages: No ſooner was a *Reformation* attempted but the Church of *Rome* make the ſame out-cry of *Novelty* and *Singularity*: And though we have ſubſtantially anſwered it a thouſand times, yet we cannot obtain of them to forbear that thread-bare Queſtion, *Where was your Religion before Luther?*

I ſhall therefore apply my ſelf to anſwer theſe *two* Exceptions with all the brevity and clearneſs I can: And I doubt not to make it appear, that as to the point of *Univerſality* (though that be no-wiſe neceſſary to juſtifie the truth of any Religion) ours is not inferiour to theirs; if we take in the Chriſtians of all Ages, and of all parts of the World; And as to the point of *Antiquity*, that our Faith and the Doctrines of our Religion have clearly the advantage of theirs; all *our* Faith being unqueſtionably ancient, *theirs* not ſo.

1. As to the Point of *Univerſality*. Which they of the Church of *Rome*, I know not for what reaſon, will needs make an inſeparable property and mark of the true Church. And they never flout at the Proteſtant Religion with ſo good a grace among the ignorant people, as when they are bragging of their Numbers, and deſpiſing poor Proteſtancy becauſe embraced by ſo few. This *peſtilent Northern Hereſie* (as of late they ſcornfully call it) entertained it ſeems only in this cold and cloudy Corner of the World, by a company of dull ſtupid People, that can neither penetrate into the proofs nor the poſſibility of *Tranſubſtantiation*; whereas to the more refined *Southern* Wits all theſe difficult and obſcure Points are as clear as their Sun at Noon-day.

But to ſpeak to the thing it ſelf. If Number be neceſſary to prove the truth and goodneſs of any Religion, *ours* upon enquiry will be found not ſo inconſiderable as our Adverſaries would make it. Thoſe of the *Reformed* Religion, according to the moſt exact calculations that have been made by learned men, being eſteemed not much unequal in number to thoſe of the *Romiſh* perſuaſion. But then if we take in the ancient Chriſtian Church, whoſe Faith was the ſame with ours; and other Chriſtian Churches at this day, which altogether are vaſtly greater and more numerous than the *Roman* Church, and which agree with us, ſeveral of them in very conſiderable Doctrines and Practices in diſpute between us and the Church of *Rome*, and all of them in diſclaiming that fundamental point of the *Roman* Religion, and *Summ of Chriſtianity* (as *Bellarmine* calls it) I mean the *Supremacy of the Biſhop of* Rome *over all Chriſtians and Churches in the World*, then the Number on our ſide will be much greater than on theirs.

But we will not ſtand upon this advantage with them. Suppoſe we were by much the fewer. So hath the true Church of God often been, without any the leaſt prejudice to the truth of their Religion. What think we of the Church in *Abraham*'s time, which for ought we know was confined to one Family; and one ſmall Kingdom, that of *Melchiſedec* King of *Salem?* What think we of it in *Moſes* his time, when it was confined to one People wandering in a Wilderneſs? What of it in *Elijah*'s time, when beſides the *two* Tribes that worſhipped at *Jeruſalem*, there were in the other *ten* but *ſeven thouſand that had not bowed their knee to Baal?* What in our Saviour's time, when the whole Chriſtian Church conſiſted of twelve Apoſtles, and ſeventy Diſciples, and ſome few Followers beſide? How would *Bellarmine* have deſpiſed this little Flock, becauſe it wanted one or two of his goodlieſt marks of the true Church, *Univerſality* and *Splendor?* And what think we of the Chriſtian Church in the height of *Arianiſm* and *Pelagianiſm*, when a great part of *Chriſtendom* was over-run with theſe Errors, and the number of the *Orthodox* was inconſiderable in compariſon of the *Hereticks?*

But what need I to urge theſe Inſtances? As if the Truth of a Religion were to be eſtimated and carried by the *major Vote*; which as it can be an Argument to none but Fools, ſo I dare ſay no honeſt and wiſe man ever made uſe of it for a ſolid proof of the truth and goodneſs of any Church or Religion. If multitude be an Argument that men are in the right, in vain then hath the *Scripture* ſaid, *thou ſhalt not follow a multitude to do evil*: For if this Argument be of any force, the greater number never go wrong.

2. As to the Point of *Antiquity*. This is not always a certain Mark of the true Religion. For ſurely there was a time when Chriſtianity began and was a new Profeſſion, and then both *Judaiſm* and *Paganiſm* had certainly the advantage of it in Point of Antiquity. But the proper Queſtion in this Caſe is, *Which is the true Ancient Chriſtian Faith, that of the Church of* Rome, *or Ours?* And to make this matter plain, it is be conſidered, that a great part of the *Roman* Faith is the ſame with *Ours*; as, namely, the Article's of the Apoſtle's *Creed*, as explained by the firſt four General Councils. And theſe make up our whole Faith, ſo far as concerns matters of meer and ſimple Belief, that are of abſolute neceſſity to Salvation. And in this Faith of Ours, there is nothing wanting that can be ſhewn in any ancient *Creed* of the Chriſtian Church. And thus far *Our* Faith, and *theirs* of the *Roman* Church, are undoubtedly of equal Antiquity, that is, as ancient as Chriſtianity it ſelf.

All the Queſtion is, as to the matters in difference between us. The Principal whereof are the twelve new Articles of the Creed of Pope *Pius* the IV, concerning the *Sacrifice of the Maſs*, *Tranſubſtantiaton*, the *Communion in one kind only*, *Purgatory*, *&c.* not one of which is to be found in any ancient *Creed* or Confeſſion of Faith generally allowed in the Chriſtian Church. The Antiquity of theſe we deny, and affirm them to be Innovations; and have particularly proved them to be ſo, not only to the anſwering, but almoſt to the ſilencing of our Adverſaries.

And as for the *negative* Articles of the *Proteſtant* Religion, in oppoſition to the Errours and Corruptions of the *Romiſh* Faith, theſe are by accident become a part of our Faith and Religion, occaſioned by their Errours; as the renouncing of the Doctrines of *Arianiſm* became part of the *Catholick* Religion, after the riſe of that Hereſie.

So that the Caſe is plainly this; we believe and teach all that is contained in the *Creeds* of the ancient Chriſtian Church, and was by them eſteemed neceſſary to Salvation: and this is *Our* Religion. But now the Church of *Rome* hath innovated in the Chriſtian Religion, and made ſeveral Additions to it; and greatly corrupted it both in the Doctrines and Practices of it: And theſe *Additions* and *Corruptions* are their Religion, as it is diſtinct from ours; and both becauſe they are *Corruptions* and *Novelties* we have rejected them: And our rejection of theſe is our Reformation: And our Reformation we grant (if this will do them any good) not to be ſo ancient as their Corruptions: All Reformation neceſſarily ſuppoſing Corruptions and Errors to have been before it.

And now we are at a little better leiſure to anſwer that captious Queſtion of theirs, *Where was your Religion before Luther*? Where-ever Chriſtianity was; in ſome places more pure, in others more corrupted: but eſpecially in theſe *Weſtern* parts of Chriſtendom over-grown for ſeveral Ages with manifold Errors and Corruptions, which the Reformation hath happily cut off, and caſt away. So that though our *Reformation* was as late as *Luther*, our *Religion* is as ancient as Chriſtianity it ſelf. For when the *Additions* which the Church of *Rome* hath made to the *ancient* Chriſtian Faith, and their Innovations in practice are pared off, that which remains of *their* Religion is *our's*; and *this* they cannot deny to be every tittle of it the ancient Chriſtianity.

And what other Anſwer than this could the *Jews* have given to the like Queſtion, if it had been put to them by the *ancient Idolaters* of the World, *Where was your Religion before Abraham?* but the very ſame in ſubſtance which we now give to the Church of *Rome*? That for many Ages the Worſhip of the one true God had been corrupted, and the Worſhip of Idols had prevailed in a great part of the World; that *Abraham* was raiſed up by God to reform Religion, and to reduce the Worſhip of God to its firſt Inſtitution; in the doing whereof he neceſſarily ſeparated Himſelf and his Family from the Communion of thoſe Idolaters. So that though the *Reformation* which *Abraham* began was new, yet his *Religion* was truly ancient; as old as that of *Noah*, and *Enoch*, and *Adam*. Which is the ſame in ſubſtance that we ſay, and with the ſame and equal reaſon.

And if they will ſtill complain of the *Newneſs* of our *Reformation*, ſo do we too, and are heartily ſorry it began no ſooner; but however better late than never. Beſides, it ought to be conſidered, that this Objection of *Novelty* lies againſt all Reformation whatſoever, though never ſo neceſſary, and though things be never ſo much amiſs: And it is in effect to ſay, that if things be once bad, they muſt never be better, but muſt always remain as they are; for they cannot be better, without being reformed, and a Reformation muſt begin ſometime, and whenever it begins it is certainly new. So that if a real Reformation be made, the thing juſtifies it ſelf; and no Objection of *Novelty* ought to take place againſt that which upon all accounts was ſo fit and neceſſary to be done. And if they of the Church of *Rome* would but ſpeak their mind out in this matter, they are not ſo much diſpleaſed at the Reformation which we have made becauſe it is *new*, as because it is a *Reformation*. It was the humour of *Babylon* of old (as the *Prophet* tells us) that ſhe *would not be healed*; and this is ſtill the temper of the Church of *Rome*, they *hate to be reformed*; and rather than acknowledge themſelves to have been once in an Error, they will continue in it for ever. And this is that which at firſt made, and ſtill continues the breach and *Separation* between us; of which we are no-wiſe guilty who have only reformed what was amiſs, but they who obſtinately perſiſt in their Errors, and will needs impoſe them upon us and will not let us be of their Communion unleſs we will ſay they are no Errors. Jer. 51. 9.

II. II. The other *Prejudice* againſt the true Religion is, *the contrariety of it to the vicious inclinations and practices of Men.*

It is too heavy a yoke, and lays too great a reſtraint upon humane Nature. And this is that which in truth lies at the bottom of all Objections againſt Religion, *Men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

But this Argument will require a Diſcourſe by it ſelf, and therefore I ſhall not now enter upon it; only crave your patience a little longer, whilſt I make ſome Reflections upon what hath been already delivered.

You ſee what are the *Exceptions* which Idolatry and Superſtition have always made, and do at this day ſtill make, againſt the true Religion; and how ſlight and inſignificant they are.

But do we then charge the Church of *Rome* with Idolatry? our Church moſt certainly does ſo, and hath always done it from the beginning of the Reformation; in her *Homilies*, and *Lyturgy*, and *Canons*, and in the *Writings* of her beſt and ableſt *Champions*. And though I have, as impartially as I could, conſidered what hath been ſaid on both ſides in this Controverſie; yet I muſt confeſs I could never yet ſee any tolerable defence made by them againſt this heavy charge. And they themſelves acknowledge themſelves to be greatly under the ſuſpicion of it, by ſaying (as Cardinal *Perron* and others do) that the primitive Chriſtians for ſome Ages did neither worſhip Images, nor pray to Saints, for fear of being thought to approach too near the Heathen Idolatry: And which is yet more; divers of their moſt learned men do confeſs, that if Tranſubſtantiation be not true, they are groſs Idolaters as any in the World. And I hope they do not expect it from us, that in complement to them, and to acquit them from the charge of Idolatry, we ſhould preſently deny our ſenſes, and believe Tranſubſtantiation; and if we do not believe this, they grant we have Reaſon to charge them with Idolatry

But we own them to be a true Church; which they cannot be, if they be guilty of Idolatry: This they often urge us withall, and there ſeems at firſt ſight to be ſomething in it: And for that reaſon I ſhall endeavour to give ſo clear and ſatisfactory an anſwer to it, as that we may never more be troubled with it

The truth is, we would fain hope, becauſe they ſtill retain the Eſſentials of Chriſtianity, and profeſs to believe all the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, that notwithſtanding their Corruptions they may ſtill retain the true Eſſence of a Church: as a man may be truly and really a man, though he have the Plague upon him; and for that reaſon

ſon be fit to be avoided by all that wiſh well to themſelves: But if this will not do, we cannot help it. Therefore to puſh the matter home; Are they ſure that this is a firm and good conſequence, *That if they be Idolaters, they cannot be a true Church*? Then let them look to it. It is they, I take it, that are concerned to prove themſelves a true Church, and not we to prove it for them. And if they will not underſtand it of themſelves, it is fit they ſhould be told that there is a great difference between Conceſſions of Charity and of Neceſſity, and that a very different uſe ought to be made of them. We are willing to think the beſt of them; but if they diſlike our Charity in this point, nothing againſt the hair: If they will forgive us this Injury, we will not offend them any more: But rather than have any farther difference with them about this matter, we will for quietneſs ſake compound it thus; That till they can clearly acquit themſelves from being Idolaters, they ſhall never more againſt their wills be eſteemed a true Church.

And now to draw to a Concluſion.

If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, and to worſhip him only; to pray to him alone, and that only in the name and mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, as he hath given us Commandment; *becauſe there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and Man, The Man Chriſt Jeſus. If it ſeem evil unto you*, to have the liberty to ſerve God in a Language you can underſtand; and to have the free uſe of the Holy *Scriptures, which are able to make men wiſe unto Salvation*; and to have the Sacraments of our Religion entirely adminiſtred to us, as our Lord did inſtitute and appoint.

And on the other hand, if it ſeem good to us, to put our necks once more under that yoke, which our Fathers were not able to bear: If it be really a Preferment to a Prince to hold the Pope's Stirrup, and a Privilege to be depoſed by him at his pleaſure, and a courteſie to be kill'd at his command: If to pray without Underſtanding, and to obey without Reaſon, and to believe againſt Senſe; if Ignorance, and implicit Faith, and an Inquiſition, be in good earneſt ſuch charming and deſirable things: Then welcome Popery; which, where-ever thou comeſt, doſt infallibly bring all theſe wonderfull Privileges and Bleſſings along with thee.

But the Queſtion is not now about the *choice*, but the *change* of our Religion, after we have been ſo long ſettled in the quiet poſſeſſion and enjoyment of it. Men are very loth to change even a falſe Religion. *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which yet are no Gods*? And ſurely there is much more reaſon why we ſhould be tenacious of the Truth, and hold faſt that which is good.

We have the beſt Religion in the World, the very ſame which *the Son of God* revealed, which the *Apoſtles* planted and confirmed by Miracles, and which the *noble Army of Martyrs* ſealed with their Blood: And we have retrench'd from it all falſe Doctrines and ſuperſtitious Practices which have been added ſince. And I think we may without immodeſty ſay, That upon the plain ſquare of Scripture and Reaſon, of the Tradition and Practice of the firſt and beſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church, we have fully juſtified *Our* Religion; and made it evident to the World, that our Adverſaries are put to very hard ſhifts, and upon a perpetual diſadvantage in the defence of *Theirs*.

I wiſh it were as eaſie for us to juſtifie our Lives as our Religon. I do not mean in compariſon of our Adverſaries (for that, as bad as we are, I hope we are yet able to do) but in compariſon of the Rules of our holy *Religion*, from which we are infinitely ſwerv'd; which I would to God we all did ſeriouſly conſider and lay to heart: I ſay, in compariſon of the Rules of our Holy Religion, which *teach us to deny ungodlineſs and Worldly luſts, and to live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World, in expectation of the bleſſed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*; To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, *&c.*

SERMON

SERMON XXVIII.

OBJECTIONS
Againſt the
True RLIGION
ANSWER'D.

JOSHUA xxiv. 15.

And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.

THeſe words, as I have already declared in the former Diſcourſe, are the laſt counſel and advice which *Joſhua* gave to the People of *Iſrael*, after he had ſafely conducted them into the Land of *Canaan*. And that he might the more effectually perſwade them to continue ſtedfaſt in the worſhip of the true God, by an eloquent kind of inſinuation he doth as it were once more ſet them at liberty and leave them to their own choice; *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.*

The plain ſenſe of which Words may be reſolved into this *Propoſition*, That notwithſtanding all the prejudices and objections againſt the true Religion, yet it hath thoſe real advantages on its ſide that it may ſafely be referred to any impartial and conſiderate man's choice; *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord*; intimating that to ſome perſons, and upon ſome accounts, it may ſeem ſeem ſo; but when the matter is throughly examined, the reſolution and choice cannot be difficult, nor require any long deliberation, *Chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.*

The true Religion hath always layn under ſome prejudices with partial and inconſiderate men ariſing chiefly from theſe *two* Cauſes; the *prepoſſeſſions of a falſe Religion*; and *the contrariety of the true Religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneaſineſs of it in point of Practice.*

Firſt, *from the prepoſſeſſions of a falſe Religion*; which hath always been wont to lay claim to *Antiquity and Univerſality*, and to charge the true Religion with *Novelty* and *Singularity*. And both theſe are intimated before the Text; *put away the Gods whom your Fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the Flood and in Egypt, and chuſe you this day whom you will ſerve.* It was pretended that the worſhip of Idols was the ancient Religion of the World, of thoſe great Nations, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and of all the Nations round about them. But this hath already been conſidered at large.

Secondly, There are another ſort of Prejudices againſt Religion, more apt to ſtick with men of better ſenſe and reaſon; and theſe ariſe principally from *the contrariety of the true Religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneaſineſs of it in point of practice.* It is pretended that Religion is a heavy yoke, and lays too great a reſtraint upon humane Nature, and that the Laws of it bear too hard upon the general inclinations of mankind.

I ſhall not at preſent meddle with the ſpeculative Objections againſt Religion, upon account of the pretended unreaſonableneſs of many things in point of Belief: becauſe the contrariety of the true Religion to the inclinations of men, and the uneaſineſs of it in point of practice, is that which in truth lies at the bottom of Atheiſm and Infidelity, and raiſes all that animoſity which is in the minds of bad men againſt Religion, and exaſperates them to oppoſe it with all their wit and malice: *Men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.* And if this prejudice were but once removed, and men were in ſome meaſure reconciled to the practice of Religion, the ſpeculative Objections againſt it would almoſt vaniſh of themſelves: for there wants little elſe to enable a man to anſwer them, but a willingneſs of mind to have them anſwered, and that we have no intereſt and inclination to the contrary. And therefore I ſhall at preſent wholly apply my ſelf to remove this prejudice againſt Religion, from *the contrariety of it to the inclinations of men*, and *the uneaſineſs of it in point of practice*.

And there are two parts of this Objection.

1ſt. That a great part of the Laws of Religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be from God. And,

2ly. That all of them together are a heavy yoke, and do lay too great a reſtraint upon humane Nature, intrenching too much upon the pleaſures and liberty of it.

I. *That a great part of the Laws of Religion do thwart the natural inclinations of men, which may reaſonably to be ſuppoſed be from God.* So that God ſeems to have ſet our nature and our duty at variance, to have given us appetites and inclinations one way, and Laws another: Which if it were true, muſt needs render the practice of Religion very grievous and uneaſie.

The force of this Objection is very ſmartly expreſſed in thoſe celebrated Verſes of a Noble *Poet* of our own, which are ſo frequently in the mouths of many who are thought to bear no good will to Religion.

O weariſome condition of Humanity,
Born under one Law, to another bound;
Vainly begot, and yet forbidden Vanity;
Created ſick, commanded to be ſound.
If Nature did not take delight in blood,
She would have made more eaſie ways to good.

So that this Objection would fain charge the ſins of men upon God; firſt upon account of the evil inclinations of our Nature; and then of the contrariety of our duty to thoſe inclinations. And from the beginning man hath always been apt to lay the blame of his faults where it can leaſt lie, upon goodneſs and perfection it ſelf. The very firſt ſin that ever man was guilty of he endeavoured to throw upon God: *The woman whom thou gaveſt me* (ſaith *Adam*) *ſhe gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* And his poſterity are ſtill apt to excuſe themſelves the ſame way. But to return a particular anſwer to this Objection.

1. We will acknowledge ſo much of it as is true; That there is a great degeneracy and corruption of humane Nature, from what it was originally framed when it came out of God's hands: of which the Scripture gives us this account, that it was occaſioned by the voluntary tranſgreſſion of a plain and eaſie Command given by God to our firſt Parents. And this weakneſs contracted by the fall of our firſt Parents naturally deſcends upon us their Poſterity, and viſibly diſcovers it ſelf in our inclinations to evil, and impotence to that which is good.

And of this the Heathen Philoſophers, from the light of nature, and their own experience and obſervation of themſelves and others, were very ſenſible; that humane Nature was very much declined from its primitive rectitude, and ſunk into a weak and drooping and ſickly State which they called a πτεροῤῥύησις, the moulting of the wings of the ſoul: But yet they were ſo juſt and reaſonable as not to charge this upon God, but upon ſome corruption and impurity contracted by the Soul in a former State, before its union with the Body. For the deſcent of the Soul into theſe groſs earthly Bodies they looked upon as partly the puniſhment of faults committed in a former State, and partly as the opportunity of a new trial in order to its purgation and recovery. And this was the beſt account they were able to give of this matter, without the Light of divine Revelation.

So that the degeneracy of humane Nature is univerſally acknowledged, and God accquitted from being the cauſe of it: But however, the poſterity of *Adam* do all partake of the weakneſs contracted by his fall, and do ſtill labour under the miſeries and inconveniences of it. But then this degeneracy is not total. For though our faculties be much weakned and diſordered, yet they are not deſtroyed nor wholly perverted. Our natural Judgment and Conſcience doth ſtill direct to us what is good, and what we ought to do; and the impreſſions of the natural Law, as to the great lines of our duty, are ſtill legible upon our hearts. So that the Law written in God's Word is not contrary to the Law written upon our hearts. And therefore it is not truly ſaid, *that we are born under one Law and bound to another.* But the great diſorder is, that our inferiour faculties, our ſenſitive appetite and paſſions, are broke looſe and have got head of our Reaſon, and are upon all occaſions apt to rebell againſt it: but our Judgment ſtill dictates the very ſame things which the Law of God doth enjoyn.

It is likewiſe very viſible, that the ſad effects of this degeneracy do not appear equally and alike in all: whether from the better or worſe temper of our Bodies or from ſome other more ſecret cauſe, I ſhall not determine, becauſe I know not: But that there is a difference is evident. For though a proneneſs to evil, and ſome ſeeds of it be in all, yet we may plainly diſcover in many very early and forward inclinations to ſome kinds of vertue and goodneſs: which being cultivated by Education, may under the ordinary influence of God's grace be carried on with great eaſe to great perfection.

And there are others who are not ſo ſtrongly bent to that which is evil, but that by good inſtruction and example in their tender years they may be ſwayed the other way, and without great difficulty formed to goodneſs.

There are ſome indeed (which is the hardeſt caſe) in whom there do very early appear ſtrong propenſions and inclinations to evil, eſpecially to ſome particular kinds of vice: But the caſe of theſe is not deſperate; though greater attention and care, and a much more prudent management is required in the education of ſuch perſons to correct their evil tempers, and by degrees to bend their inclinations the right way: and if the ſeeds of piety and vertue be but carefully ſown at firſt, very much may be done by this means, even in the moſt depraved Natures, towards the altering and changing of them; however, to the checking and controuling of their vicious inclinations. And if theſe perſons, when they come to riper years, would purſue theſe advantages of education, and take ſome pains with themſelves, and earneſtly ſeek the aſſiſtance of God's grace, I doubt not but even theſe perſons by degrees might at laſt get the maſtery of their unhappy tempers.

For next to the Being and perfections of God, and the immortality of our own Souls, there is no Principle of Religion that I do more firmly believe than this, that God hath that love for men that if we do heartily beg his aſſiſtance, and be not wanting to our ſelves, he will afford it to every one of us in proportion to our need of it; that he is always before hand with us, and prevents every man with the gracious offers of his help. And I doubt not but many very perverſe Natures have thus been reclaimed. For God, who is the *Lover of Souls* (as the Son of *Sirach* calls him) though he may put ſome men under more difficult circumſtances of becoming good than others, yet he leaves no man under a fatal neceſſity of being wicked and periſhing everlaſtingly. He tenderly conſiders every man's caſe and circumſtances, and it is we that pull deſtruction upon our ſelves, with the works of our own hands: But as ſure as God is good and juſt, no man in the World is ruined for want of having ſufficient help and aid afforded to him by God for his recovery.

2. It is likewiſe to be conſidered that God did not deſign to create man in the full Poſſeſſion of happineſs at firſt, but to train him up to it by the tryal of his obedience without ſome difficulty in our duty: Either by reaſon of powerfull temptations from without, or of croſs and perverſe inclinations from within.

Our firſt Parents, in their ſtate of innocency, had only the tryal of temptation without; to which they yielded, and were overcome; having only a natural power to have reſiſted the temptation, without any aid of ſupernatural grace: And that weakneſs to good, and proneneſs to evil, which they by willfull tranſgreſſion contracted, is naturally derived to us; and we neceſſarily partake of the bitterneſs and impurity of the Fountain from whence we ſpring. So that we now labour under a double difficulty; being aſſaulted by temptations from without, and incited by evil inclinations from within: But then, to balance theſe, we have a double advantage; that a greater reward is propoſed to us, than for ought we know would have been conferred on our firſt Parents had they continued innocent; and that we are endued with a ſupernatural power to conflict with theſe difficulties. So that, according to the merciful diſpenſation of God, all this conflict between our inclination and our duty does only ſerve to give a fairer opportunity for the fitting our tryal of obedience, and for the more glorious reward of it.

3. God hath provided an univerſal remedy for this degeneracy and weakneſs of humane Nature: So that what we loſt by the firſt *Adam* is abundantly repaired to us by the ſecond. This St *Paul* tells us at large, *Rom.* 5. That *as by one man ſin entred into the World, and death by ſin; ſo the grace of*

God hath abounded to all men by Jeſus Chriſt: And that to ſuch a degree, as effectually to countervail the ill effects of original ſin, and really to enable men, if they be not wanting to themſelves, to maſter and ſubdue all the bad inclinations of nature, even in thoſe who ſeem to be naturally moſt corrupt and depraved.

And if this be true, we may without any reflection upon God acknowledge, that though he did not at firſt *create* man *ſick* and *weak*, yet he having made himſelf ſo, his poſterity are born ſo. But then God hath not left us helpleſs in this weak and miſerable State, into which by wilful tranſgreſſion mankind is fallen: But as he commands us to be *ſound*, ſo he affords us ſufficient aids of his grace by Jeſus Chriſt for our recovery.

And though *there is a Law in our Members warring againſt the Law of our Minds, and captivating us to to the Law of Sin and Death*; *i. e.* though our ſenſitive appetite and paſſions are apt to rebell againſt the reaſon of our minds and the dictates of our natural Conſcience, yet every Chriſtian may ſay with St. *Paul*, *Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, *i. e.* hath not left us deſtitute of a ſufficient aid and ſtrength to enable us to conquer the rebellious motions of ſin, by the powerfull aſſiſtance of that grace which is ſo plentifully offered to us in the Goſpel. And this is the caſe of all thoſe who live under the Goſpel: As for others, as their caſe is beſt known to God, ſo we have no reaſon to doubt but that his infinite goodneſs and mercy takes that care of them which becomes *a merciful Creator*: Though both the meaſures, and the methods of his mercy towards them are ſecret and unknown to us.

4. The hardeſt conteſt between man's inclination and duty, is in thoſe who have wilfully contracted vicious habits, and by that means, rendred their duty much more difficult to themſelves: having greatly improved the evil inclinations of nature by wicked practice and cuſtom. For the *Scripture* plainly ſuppoſeth, that men may debauch even corrupt nature, and make themſelves ten-fold more the Children of Wrath and of the Devil than they were by nature.

This is a caſe ſadly to be deplored, but yet not utterly to be deſpaired of. And therefore thoſe who by a long progreſs in an evil courſe, are plunged into this ſad condition, ought to conſider that they are not to be reſcued out of it by an ordinary reſolution, and a common grace of God. Their caſe plainly requires an extraordinary remedy. For he that is deeply engaged in vice is like a man laid faſt in a bogg, who by a faint and lazy ſtruggling to get out, does but ſpend his ſtrength to no purpoſe, and ſinks himſelf the deeper into it: The only way is, by a reſolute and vigorous effort to ſpring out, if poſſible, at once. And therefore in this caſe, to a vigorous reſolution there muſt be joyned an earneſt application to God for his powerfull grace and aſſiſtance, to help us out of this miſerable State. And if we be truly ſenſible of the deſperate danger of our condition, the preſſing neceſſity of our caſe will be apt to inſpire us with a mighty reſolution. For *power and neceſſity are neighbours*, and never dwell far aſunder. When men are ſorely urged and preſſed, they find a power in themſelves which they thought they had not. Like a coward driven up to a wall, who in the extremity of diſtreſs and deſpair will fight terribly and perform wonders: or like a man lame of the Gout, who being aſſaulted by a preſent and terrible danger forgets his Diſeaſe, and will find his legs rather than loſe his life.

And in this, I do not ſpeak above the rate of humane Nature, and what men throughly rouſed and awakened to a ſenſe of their danger, by a mighty reſolution may morally do, through that Divine grace and aſſiſtance which is ever ready to be afforded to well reſolved minds, and ſuch as are ſincerely bent to return to God and their Duty. More than this I cannot ſay for the encouragement of thoſe who have proceeded far in an evil courſe: And they who have made their caſe ſo very deſperate, ought to be very thankfull to God that there is any remedy left for them.

5. From all that hath been ſaid, it evidently appears, how malicious a ſuggeſtion it is, that God ſeeks the deſtruction of men, and hath made his Laws on purpoſe ſo difficult and croſs to our inclinations that he might have an advantage to ruin us for our diſobedience to them. Alas, we are ſo abſolutely under the power of God, and ſo unable to withſtand it, that he may deſtroy us when he pleaſeth, without ſeeking pretences for it: *For who hath reſiſted his will?* If goodneſs were not his nature, he hath power enough to bear out whatever he hath a mind to do to us. But our deſtruction is plainly of our ſelves, and God is free from the blood of all men. And he hath not made the way to Eternal Life ſo difficult to any of us, with a deſign to make us miſerable, but that we by a vigorous reſolution, and unwearied diligence, and a patient continuance in well doing, might win and wear a more glorious Crown, and be fit to receive a more ample reward from his bounty and goodneſs: yea, in ſome ſenſe, I may ſay, from his Juſtice; *For God is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour and love.* He will fully conſider all the pains that any of us take in his ſervice, and all the difficulties that we ſtruggle with out of love to God and goodneſs. So that this Objection, from the claſhing of our duty with our inclination, is I hope fully anſwered: Since God hath provided ſo powerful and effectual a remedy againſt our natural impotency and infirmity, by the Grace of the Goſpel.

And thongh to thoſe who have wilfully contracted vicious habits a religious and vertuous courſe of life be very difficult, yet the main difficulty lyes in our firſt entrance upon it; And when that is over, the ways of goodneſs are as eaſie as it is fit any thing ſhould be that is ſo excellent, and that hath the encouragement of ſo glorious a reward. Cuſtom will reconcile men almoſt to any thing: but there are thoſe charms in the ways of wiſdom and vertue, that a little acquaintance and converſation with them will ſoon make them more delightfull than any other courſe. And who would grudge any pains and trouble to bring himſelf into ſo ſafe and happy a condition: After we have tryed both courſes, of Religion and Profaneneſs, of Vertue and Vice, we ſhall certainly find, that nothing is ſo wiſe, ſo eaſie, and ſo comfortable as to be vertuous and good, and always to do that which we are inwardly convinced we ought to do. Nor would I deſire more of any man in this matter, than to follow the ſobereſt convictions of his own mind, and to do that which upon the moſt ſerious conſideration at all times, in proſperity and affliction, in ſickneſs and health, in the time of life and at the hour of death, he judgeth wiſeſt and ſafeſt for him to do, I proceed to the

II. Branch of the Objection, *That the Laws of Religion* (and particularly of the *Chriſtian Religion*) *are a heavy yoke, laying too great a reſtraint upon humane nature, and entrenching too much upon the pleaſures and liberty of it.*

There was, I confeſs, ſome pretence for this Objection againſt the *Jewiſh* Religion: which by the multitude of its poſitive Inſtitutions and external Obſervances muſt needs have been very burthenſome. And the ſame

Objection lyes againſt the Church of *Rome*, who (as they have handled Chriſtianity) by the unreaſonable number of their needleſs and ſenſeleſs Ceremonies, have made the yoke of *Chriſt* heavier than that of *Moſes*, and the *Goſpel* a more carnal Commandment than the *Law*. So that *Chriſtianity* is loſt among them in the trappings and accoutrements of it: with which inſtead of adorning Religion they have ſtrangely diſguiſed it, and quite ſtifled it in the crowd of external Rites and Ceremonies.

But the pure Chriſtian Religion, as it was delivered by our *Saviour*, hath hardly any thing in it that is poſitive; except the two Sacraments, which are not very troubleſome neither, but very much for our comfort and advantage, becauſe they convey and confirm to us the great bleſſings and privileges of our Religion. In other things, Chriſtianity hath hardly impoſed any other Laws upon us but what are enacted in our Natures, or are agreeable to the prime and fundamental Laws of it: nothing but what every man's reaſon either dictates to him to be neceſſary, or approves as highly fit and reaſonable.

But we do moſt groſly miſtake the nature of pleaſure and liberty, if we promiſe them to our ſelves in any evil and wicked courſe. For, upon due ſearch and tryal it will be found, that true pleaſure, and perfect freedom, are no-where to be found but in the practice of vertue, and in the ſervice of God. The Laws of Religion do not abridge us of any pleaſure that a wiſe man can deſire, and ſafely enjoy, I mean without a greater evil and trouble conſequent upon it. The pleaſure of commanding our appetites, and governing our paſſions, by the rules of Reaſon (which are the Laws of God) is infinitely to be preferred before any ſenſual pleaſure whatſoever: Becauſe it is the pleaſure of wiſdom and diſcretion; and gives us the ſatisfaction of having done that which is beſt and fitteſt for reaſonable Creatures to do. Who would not rather chuſe to govern himſelf as *Scipio* did, amidſt all the temptations and opportunities of ſenſual pleaſure which his power and victories preſented to him, than to wallow in all the delights of ſenſe?

Nothing is more certain in reaſon and experience, than that every inordinate appetite and affection is a puniſhment to it ſelf; and is perpetually croſſing its own pleaſure, and defeating its own ſatisfaction, by over-ſhooting the mark it aims at. For inſtance, *Intemperance* in eating and drinking, inſtead of delighting and ſatisfying nature, doth but load and cloy it; and inſtead of quenching a natural thirſt, which it is extreamly pleaſant to do, creates an unnatural one, which is troubleſome and endleſs. The pleaſure of *Revenge*, as ſoon as it is executed turns into grief and pity, guilt and remorſe, and a thouſand melancholy wiſhes that we had reſtrained our ſelves from ſo unreaſonable an Act. And the ſame is as evident in other ſenſual exceſſes, not ſo fit to be deſcribed. We may truſt *Epicurus* for this, that there can be no true pleaſure without temperance in the uſe of pleaſure. And God and Reaſon have ſet us no other bounds concerning the uſe of ſenſual pleaſures, but that we take care not to be injurious to our ſelves, or others, in the kind, or degree of them. And it is very viſible, that all ſenſual exceſs is naturally attended with a double inconvenience: As it goes beyond the limits of naure, it begets bodily pains and diſeaſes: As it tranſgreſſeth the Rules of Reaſon and Religion, it breeds guilt and remorſe in the mind. And theſe are, beyond compariſon, the two greateſt evils in this world; a diſeaſed body, and a diſcontented mind; And in this I am ſure I ſpeak to the inward feeling and experience of men; and ſay nothing but what every vicious man finds, and hath a more lively ſenſe of, than is to be expreſſed by words.

When all is done, there is no pleaſure comparable to that of Innocency, and freedom from the ſtings of a guilty conſcience; This is a pure and ſpiritual pleaſure, much above any ſenſual delight. And yet among all the delights of ſenſe, that of health (which is the natural conſequent of a ſober, and chaſte, and regular life) is a ſenſual pleaſure far beyond that of any Vice: For it is the life of life; and that which gives a grateful reliſh to all our other enjoyments. It is not indeed ſo violent and tranſporting a pleaſure, but it is pure, and even, and laſting, and hath no guilt and regret, no ſorrow and trouble in it, or after it: which is a worm that infallibly breeds in all vicious and unlawfull pleaſures, and makes them to be bitterneſs in the end.

All the ways of ſin are ſo beſet with thorns and difficulties on every ſide, there are ſo many unanſwerable objections againſt Vice, from the unreaſonableneſs and uglineſs of it, from the remorſe that attends it, from the endleſs miſery that follows it, that none but the raſh and inconſiderate can obtain leave of themſelves to commit it. It is the daughter of inadvertency, and blindneſs, and folly; and the Mother of guilt, and repentance, and woe. There is no pleaſure that will hold out and abide with us to the laſt, but that of Innocency and well-doing. All ſin is folly; and as *Seneca* truly ſays, *omnis ſtultitia laborat faſtidio ſui*; *All folly ſoon grows ſick and weary of it ſelf.* The pleaſure of it is ſlight and ſuperficial, but the trouble and remorſe of it pierceth our very hearts.

And then as to the other part of the Objection, *That Religion reſtrains us of our liberty:* The contrary is evidently true, that ſin and vice are the greateſt ſlavery. For he is truly a ſlave, who is not at liberty to follow his own judgment, and to do thoſe things which he is inwardly convinced it is beſt for him to do: but is ſubject to the unreaſonable commands, and the tyrannical power and violence of his luſts and paſſions: So that he is not maſter of himſelf, but other Lords have got dominion over him, and he is perfectly at their beck and command. One vice or paſſion bids him go, and he goes; another come, and he comes; and a third do this and he doth it. The man is at perpetual variance with his own mind, and continually committing the things which he condemns in himſelf. And it is all one, whether a man be ſubject to the will and humour of another perſon, or to his own luſts and paſſions. Only this of the two is the worſe; becauſe the Tyrant is at home, and always ready at hand to domineer over him; he is got within him, and ſo much the harder to be vanquiſhed and overcome.

But the ſervice of God, and obedience to his Laws is perfect liberty. Becauſe the Law of God requires nothing of us, but what is recommended to us by our own reaſon and from the benefit and advantage of doing it: nothing but what is much more for our own intereſt to do it, than it can be for God's to command it. And if in ſome things God exact obedience of of us more indiſpenſibly, and under ſeverer penalties, it is becauſe thoſe things are in their Nature more neceſſary to our felicity. And how could God poſſibly have dealt more graciouſly and kindly with us, than to oblige us moſt ſtrictly to that which is moſt evidently for our good: and to make ſuch Laws for us, as if we live in obedience to them will infallibly make us happy? So that taking all things into conſideration, the intereſt of our bodies and our ſouls, of the preſent and the future, of this world and the other, Religion is the moſt reaſonable and wiſe, the moſt comfortable and compendious courſe that any man can take in order to his own happineſs.

The conſideration whereof ought to be a mighty endearment of our duty to us, and a moſt prevalent argument with us to yield a ready and chearful obedience to the Laws of God; which are in truth ſo many acts of grace and favour to mankind, the real privileges of our nature, and the proper means and cauſes of our happineſs: And do reſtrain us from nothing but from doing miſchief to our ſelves, from playing the fools and making our ſelves miſerable.

And therefore inſtead of oppoſing Religion, upon pretence of the unreaſonable reſtraints of it, we ought to thank God heartily, that he hath laid ſo ſtrict an obligation upon us to regard and purſue our true intereſt; and hath been pleaſed to take that care of us, as to ſet bounds to our looſe and wild appetites by our duty; and in giving us rules to live by, hath no ways complyed with our inconſiderate and fooliſh inclinations, to our real harm and prejudice: But hath made thoſe things neceſſary for us to do, which in all reſpects are beſt for us; and which, if we were perfectly left to our own liberty, ought in all reaſon to be our free and firſt choice: And hath made the folly and inconvenience of ſin ſo groſly palpable, that every man may ſee it before-hand that will but conſider, and at the beginning of a bad courſe look to the end of it; and they that will not conſider, ſhall be forced from wofull experience at laſt to acknowledge it, when they find the diſmal effects and miſchievous conſequences of their vices ſtill meeting them at one turn or other.

And now, by all that hath been ſaid upon this Argument, I hope we are ſatisfied that Religion is no ſuch intolerable yoke; and that upon a due and full conſideration of things it cannot *ſeem evil* unto any of us *to ſerve the Lord:* nay, on the contrary, that it is abſolutely neceſſary, both to our preſent peace and our future felicity: And that a religious and vertuous life is not only upon all accounts the moſt prudent, but after we are entred upon it, and accuſtomed to it, the moſt pleaſant courſe that any man can take: and however inconſiderate men may complain of the reſtraints of Religion that it is not one jot more our duty, than it is our privilege and our happineſs.

And I cannot think that upon ſober conſideration any man could ſee reaſon to thank God to be releaſed from any of his Laws, or to have had the contrary to them enjoyned. Let us ſuppoſe, that the Laws of God had been juſt the *Reverſe* of what they now are; that he had commanded us, under ſevere penalties, to deal falſly and fraudulently with our neighbour; to demean our ſelves ungratefully to our beſt friends and benefactors; to be drunk every day, and to purſue ſenſual pleaſures to the endangering of our health and life: How ſhould we have complained of the unreaſonableneſs of theſe Laws, and have murmured at the ſlavery of ſuch intolerable impoſitions? And yet now that God hath commanded us the contrary, things every way agreeable to our reaſon and intereſt, we are not pleaſed neither. What will content us? As our Saviour expoſtulates in a like caſe, *Whereunto ſhall I liken this generation? It is like unto Children playing in the Market-place, and calling unto their Companions, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned, and ye have not lamented.* This is perfectly childiſh, to be pleaſed with nothing; neither to like this, nor the contrary. We are not contented with the Laws of God as they are, and yet the contrary to them we ſhould have eſteemed the greateſt grievance in the World.

And if this be true that the Laws of God, how contrary ſoever to our vicious inclinations, are really calculated for our benefit and advantage, it would almoſt be an affront to wiſe and conſiderate men to importune them to their intereſt; and with great earneſtneſs to perſwade them to that which in all reſpects is ſo viſibly for their advantage, *Chuſe you* therefore *this day whom you will ſerve*; God, or your luſts. And take up a ſpeedy reſolution in a matter of ſo great and preſſing a concernment; chuſe you *this day.*

Where there is great hazard in the doing of a thing, it is good to deliberate long before we undertake it: but where the thing is not only ſafe but beneficial, and not only hugely beneficial but highly neceſſary; when our life and our happineſs depends upon it, and all the danger lies in the delay of it; there we cannot be too ſudden in our reſolution, nor too ſpeedy in the execution of it. That which is evidently ſafe, needs no deliberation; and that which is abſolutely neceſſary will admit of none.

Therefore reſolve upon it out of hand; *To day, whileſt it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* In the days of your youth and health; for *that is the acceptable time*, that is *the day of ſalvation:* Before the *evil day comes*, and you be driven to it by the terrible apprehenſion and approach of death, when men fly to God only for fear of his wrath. For the greateſt Atheiſts and Infidels, when they come to dye, if they have any of that reaſon left, which they have uſed ſo ill) have commonly right opinions about God and Religion. For then the confidence as well as the comfort of Atheiſm leaves them, as the Devil uſes to do Witches when they are in diſtreſs. Then with *Nebuchadnezzar*, when they are recovered from being beaſts, they look up to heaven and their underſtanding returns to them: Then they believe a God, and cannot help it: they believe, and tremble at the thoughts of him. Thus *Lucretius*, one of their *great Authors*, obſerves, that when men are in diſtreſs,

Acrius advertunt animos ad Religionem.

The thoughts of Religion are then more quick and pungent upon their minds.

Mam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Eliciuntur, & eripitur perſona, manet res.

Mens words then come from the bottom of their hearts; the mask is taken off, and things then appear as in truth they are.

But then perhaps it may be too late to make this choice: Nay, then it can hardly be choice, but neceſſity. Men do not then chuſe to ſerve the Lord, but they are urged and forced to it by their fears. They have ſerved their luſts all their life long, and now they would fain ſerve themſelves of God at the hour of death. They have done what they can, by their inſolent contempt and defiance of the Almighty, to make themſelves miſerable; and now that they can ſtand out no longer againſt him, they are contented at laſt to be beholding to him to make them happy. The mercies of God are vaſt and boundleſs, but yet methinks it is too great a preſumption in all reaſon, for men to deſign before-hand to make the mercy of God the ſanctuary and retreat of a ſinfull life.

To draw then to a Concluſion of this Diſcourſe. If ſafety, or pleaſure, or liberty, or wiſdom, or vertue, or even happineſs it ſelf have any temptation in them, Religion hath all theſe baits and allurements. What *Tully* ſays of *Philoſophy* is much more true of the *Chriſtian Religion*, the Wiſdom and Philoſophy which is from above; *Nunquam ſatis laudari poterit, cui qui pareat,*

pareat, omne tempus ætatis ſine moleſtia degere poſſit. We can never praiſe it enough, ſince whoever lives according to the rules of it, may paſs the whole age of his life (I may add, his whole duration, this life and the other) *without trouble.*

Philoſophy hath given us ſeveral plauſible rules for the attaining of peace and tranquility of mind, but they fall very much ſhort of bringing men to it. The very beſt of them fail us upon the greateſt occaſions. But the *Chriſtian Religion* hath effectually done all that which *Philoſophy* pretended to, and aimed at. The Precepts and Promiſes of the Holy Scriptures are every way ſufficient for our comfort, and for our inſtruction in righteouſneſs: to correct all the errors, and to bear us up under all the evils and adverſities of humane life: eſpecially that holy and heavenly Doctrine which is contained in the admirable Sermons of our Saviour, *Quem cum legimus, quem Philoſophum non contemnimus?* whoſe excellent Diſcourſes when we read, what Philoſopher do we not deſpiſe? None of the *Philoſophers* could, upon ſure grounds, give that encouragement to their *Scholars* which our *Saviour* does to his *Diſciples*; *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls. For my yoke is eaſie, and my burthen is light.*

This is the advantage of the *Chriſtian Religion* ſincerely believed and practiſed, that it gives perfect reſt and tranquility to the mind of man: It frees us from the guilt of an evil conſcience, and from the power of our luſts, and from the ſlaviſh fear of death, and of the vengeance of another World. It builds our comfort upon a rock, which will abide all ſtorms, and remain unſhaken in every condition, and will laſt and hold out for ever: *He that heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them* (ſaith our *Lord*) *I will liken him to a wiſe man, who built his houſe upon a rock.*

In ſhort, Religion makes the life of man a wiſe deſign, regular and conſtant to its ſelf; becauſe it unites all our reſolutions and actions in one great end: Whereas without Religion the life of man is a wild, and fluttering, and inconſiſtent thing, without any certain ſcope and deſign. The vicious man lives at random, and acts by chance: For he that walks by no rule can carry on no ſettled and ſteady deſign. It would pity a man's heart to ſee, how hard ſuch men are put to it for diverſion, and what a burden time is to them; and how ſolicitous they are to deviſe ways, not to ſpend it but to ſquander it away. For their great grievance is conſideration, and to be obliged to be intent upon any thing that is ſerious. They hurry from one vanity and folly to another; and plunge themſelves into drink, not to quench their thirſt, but their guilt: and are beholding to every vain man, and to every trifling occaſion, that can but help to take time off their hands. Wretched and inconſiderate men! who have ſo vaſt a work before them, the happineſs of all eternity to take care of and provide for, and yet are at a loſs how to employ their time! So that Irreligion and Vice makes life an extravagant and unnatural thing, becauſe it perverts and overthrows the natural courſe and order of things. For inſtance; according to nature men labour to get an Eſtate, to free themſelves from temptations to rapine and injury; and that they may have wherewithall to ſupply their own wants, and to relieve the needs of others. But now the covetous man heaps up Riches, not to enjoy them, but to have them; and ſtarves himſelf in the midſt of plenty, and moſt unnaturally cheats and robs himſelf of that which is his own; and makes a hard ſhift to be as poor and miſerable with a great Eſtate, as any man can be without it. According to the deſign of nature, men ſhould eat and drink that they may live; but the voluptuous man only lives that he may eat and drink. Nature in all ſenſual enjoyments deſigns

pleaſure,

pleaſure, which may certainly be had within the limits of vertue: But vice raſhly purſues pleaſure into the enemies quarters; and never ſtops, till the ſinner be ſurrounded and ſeized upon by pain and torment.

So that take away God and Religion, and men live to no purpoſe; without propoſing any worthy and conſiderable end of life to themſelves. Whereas the fear of God, and the care of our immortal Souls, fixeth us upon one great deſign, to which our whole life, and all the actions of it are ultimately referr'd, *Ubi unus Deus colitur* (ſaith *Lactantius*) *ibi vita, & omnis actus, ad unum caput, & ad unam ſummam refertur*; When we acknowledge God as the Author of our Being, as our Sovereign, and our Judge, our end and our happineſs is then fixed; and we can have but one reaſonable deſign, and that is, by endeavouring to pleaſe God to gain his favour and protection in this World, and to arrive at the bliſsful enjoyment of him in the other: *In whoſe preſence is fullneſs of joy; and at whoſe right hand are pleaſures for evermore.* To Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXIX.

OF THE DIFFICULTY OF Reforming Vicious Habits.

JEREMIAH xiii. 23.

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the Leopard his ſpots? then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil.

Conſidering the great difficulty of reclaiming thoſe who are far gone in an evil courſe, it is no more than needs to uſe all ſorts of Arguments to this purpoſe: From the conſideration of the evil of ſin, and of the goodneſs of God and his wonderfull patience and long-ſuffering towards us in the midſt of our infinite Provocations: From his great mercy and pity declared to us in all thoſe gracious means and methods which he uſeth for our recovery: And from his readineſs and forwardneſs after all our Rebellions to receive us upon our repentance, and to be perfectly reconciled to us as if we had never offended him: And from the final iſſue and event of a wicked life, the diſmal and endleſs miſeries of another World, into which we ſhall inevitably fall, except we repent in time and return to a better mind: And laſtly, from the danger of being hardened in an evil courſe, paſt all remedy and hopes of Repentance.

And yet I am very ſenſible that to diſcourſe to Men of the impoſſibility, or at leaſt the extreme difficulty of reſcuing themſelves out of this miſerable ſtate ſeems to be an odd and croſs kind of Argument, and more apt to drive people to deſpair than to gain them to repentance,

But ſince the Spirit of God is pleaſed to make uſe of it to this purpoſe, we may ſafely rely upon infinite Wiſdom for the fitneſs of it to awaken ſinners to a ſenſe of their condition, in order to their recovery. For here in the Text, after terrible threatnings of Captivity and deſolation to the People of the *Jews*, who were extremely wicked and degenerate, through an univerſal depravation of manners in all Ranks of men from the higheſt to the loweſt, ſo that they ſeemed to ſtand upon the brink of ruine, and to be fatally devoted to it; to add to the terrour and force of theſe threatnings, God by his Prophet repreſents to them the infinite danger and extreme difficulty of their caſe, to ſee if he could ſtartle them by telling them into what a deſperate condition they had plunged themſelves; being by a long cuſtom of ſinning ſo far engaged in an evil courſe, that they had almoſt cut off themſelves from a poſſibiliy of retreat; ſo that the difficulty of their change ſeem'd next to a natural impoſſibility. *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil.*

The expreſſion is very high, and it is to be hoped ſomewhat Hyperbolical, and above the juſt meaning of the words. Which are, I think, only deſigned to ſignifie to us the extreme difficulty of making this change; which is therefore reſembled to a natural impoſſibility, as coming very near it, though not altogether up to it.

And that this Expreſſion is thus to be mitigated, will appear more than probable, by conſidering ſome other like paſſages of Scripture. As, where our Saviour compares the difficulty of a rich man's Salvation to that which is naturally impoſſible, *viz.* to *a Camel's paſſing through the Eye of a Needle*: Nay, he pitcheth his expreſſion higher, and doth not only make it a thing of equal but of greater difficulty; *I ſay unto you, it is eaſier for a Camel to go through the eye of a Needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.* And yet when he comes to explain this to his Diſciples, he tells them that he only meant that the thing was very difficult, *how hard is it for thoſe that have riches to be ſaved?* and that it was not abſolutely impoſſible, but ſpeaking according to humane probability: *with men this is impoſſible but not with God.*

And thus alſo it is reaſonable to underſtand that ſevere paſſage of the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 6. 4. *It is impoſſible for them that were once enlightned, if they fall away, to renew them again to Repentance. It is impoſſible,* that is, it is very difficult.

In like manner we are to underſtand this high Expreſſion in the Text, *Can the Æthiopian change his Skin or the Leopard his Spots? then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil*; that is, this moral change of men, ſettled and fixed in bad habits, is almoſt as difficult as the other.

From the words thus explained *two* things will properly fall under our Conſideration.

Firſt, The great difficulty of reforming vicious habits or of changing a bad courſe, to thoſe who have been deeply engaged in it and long accuſtomed to it.

Secondly, Notwithſtanding the great difficulty of the thing, what ground of hope and encouragement there is left that it may be done. So that notwithſtanding the appearing harſhneſs of the Text, the reſult of my diſcourſe will be, not to diſcourage any, how bad ſoever, from attempting this change, but to put them upon it, and to perſwade them to it; and to remove out of the way that which may ſeem to be one of the ſtrongeſt objections againſt all endeavours of men very bad, to become better.

I. I. *Firſt,* The great difficulty of reforming vicious habits, or of changing a bad courſe, to thoſe who have been deeply engaged in it and long accuſtomed to it. And this difficulty ariſeth, partly from the general nature of habits indifferently conſidered whether they be good, or bad, or indifferent; partly, from the particular nature of evil and vicious habits; and partly, from the natural and judicial conſequences of a great Progreſs and long continuance in an evil Courſe. By the conſideration of theſe three particulars, the extreme difficulty of this change, together with the true cauſes and reaſons of it, will fully appear.

1. If we conſider the nature of all Habits, whether good, or bad, or indifferent. The cuſtom and frequent practice of any thing begets in us a Facility and eaſineſs in doing it. It bends the powers of our Soul, and turns the ſtream and current of our animal ſpirits ſuch a way, and gives all our faculties a tendency and pliableneſs to ſuch a ſort of actions. And when we have long ſtood bent one way, we grow ſettled and confirmed in it; and cannot without great force and violence be reſtored to our former ſtate and condition. For the perfection of any habit, whether good, or bad, induceth a kind of neceſſity of acting accordingly. A rooted habit becomes a governing Principle, and bears almoſt an equal ſway in us with that which is natural. It is a kind of a new nature ſuperinduced, and even as hard to be expelled as ſome things which are Primitively and Originally natural. When we bend a thing at firſt it will endeavour to reſtore it ſelf; but it may be held bent ſo long till it will continue ſo of it ſelf and grow crooked; and then it may require more force and violence to reduce it to its former ſtraightneſs than we uſed to make it crooked at firſt. This is the nature of all habits, the farther we proceed the more we are confirmed in them: and that which at firſt we did voluntarily, by degrees becomes ſo natural and neceſſary that it is almoſt impoſſible for us to do otherwiſe. This is plainly ſeen in the experience of every day, in things good and bad, both in leſſer and greater matters.

2. This difficulty ariſeth more eſpecially from the particular nature of evil and vicious habits. Theſe, becauſe they are ſuitable to our corrupt nature, and conſpire with the inclinations of it, are likely to be of a much quicker growth and improvement, and in a ſhorter ſpace, and with leſs care and endeavour, to arrive at maturity and ſtrength, than the habits of grace and goodneſs. Conſidering the propenſion of our depraved nature, the progreſs of vertue and goodneſs is up the hill, in which we not only move hardly and heavily, but are eaſily roll'd back: but by wickedneſs and vice we move downwards; which, as it is much quicker and eaſier, ſo it is harder for us to ſtop in that courſe, and infinitely more difficult to return from it.

Not but that at firſt a ſinner hath ſome conſiderable checks and reſtraints upon him, and meets with ſeveral rubs, and difficulties in his way; the ſhame and unreaſonableneſs of his vices, and the trouble and diſquiet which they create to him: But he breaks looſe from theſe reſtraints, and gets over theſe difficulties by degrees: and the faſter and farther he advanceth in an evil courſe the leſs trouble ſtill they give him, till at laſt they almoſt quite loſe their force, and give him little or no diſturbance.

Shame alſo is a great reſtraint upon ſinners at firſt, but that ſoon falls off: and when men men have once loſt their innocence, their modeſty is not like to be long troubleſome to them. For impudence comes on with vice, and grows up with it. Leſſer vices do not baniſh all ſhame and modeſty, but great and abominable crimes harden mens foreheads and make them ſhameleſs. *Were they aſhamed* (ſaith the *Prophet*) *when they committed abomination, nay they were not aſhamed, neither could they bluſh.* When men have the heart to do a very bad thing, they ſeldom want the face to bear it out.

And as for the *unreaſonableneſs* of vice, though nothing in the World be more evident to a free and impartial judgment, and the ſinner himſelf diſcerns it clearly enough at his firſt ſetting out in a wicked courſe:

------ Video meliora, proboque,
Deteriora ſequor.

He offends againſt the light of his own mind, and does wickedly when he knows better: yet after he hath continued for ſome time in this courſe, and is heartily engaged in it, his fooliſh heart is darken'd, and the notions of good and evil are obſcured and confounded, and things appear to him in a falſe and imperfect light: His luſts do at once blind and byaſs his underſtanding; and his judgment by degrees goes over to his inclinations; and he cannot think that there ſhould be ſo much reaſon againſt thoſe things for which he hath ſo ſtrong an affection. He is now engaged in a Party, and factiouſly concerned to maintain it, and to make the beſt of it; and to that end, he bends all his wits to advance ſuch principles as are fitteſt to juſtifie his wicked practices; and in all debates plainly favours that ſide of the Queſtion which will give the greateſt countenance and encouragement to them. When men *are corrupt and do abominable works*, they *ſay in their hearts there is no God*; that is, they would fain think ſo. And every thing ſerves for an Argument to a willing mind; and every little objection appears ſtrong and conſiderable, which makes againſt that which men are loth ſhould be true.

Not that any man ever ſatisfied himſelf in the Principles of Infidelity, or was able to arrive to a ſteady and unſhaken perſuaſion of the truth of them, ſo as not vehemently to doubt and fear the contrary. However, by this means many men though they cannot fully comfort, yet they make a ſhift to cheat themſelves; to ſtill their Conſciences and lay them aſleep for a time, ſo as not to receive any great and frequent diſturbance in their courſe from the checks and rebukes of their own minds. And when theſe reſtraints are removed, the work of iniquity goes on a-main, being favoured both by wind and tide.

3. The difficulty of this change ariſeth likewiſe from the natural and judicial conſequences of a great progreſs and long continuance in an evil courſe. My meaning is, that inveterate evil habits do partly from their own nature, and partly from the juſt judgment and permiſſion of God, put men under ſeveral diſadvantages of moving effectually towards their own recovery.

By a long cuſtom of ſinning mens Conſciences grow brawny, and *ſeared as it were with a hot iron*; and by being often trampled upon they become hard as the beaten road. So that unleſs it be upon ſome extraordinary occaſion, they are ſeldom awakened to a ſenſe of their guilt. And when mens hearts are thus hard, the beſt counſels make but little impreſſion upon them. For they are ſteel'd againſt reproof, and impenetrable to good advice; which is therefore ſeldom offered to them, even by thoſe that wiſh them well, becauſe they know it to be both unacceptable, and unlikely to prevail. It requires a great deal of good nature in a very bad man, to be able patiently to bear to be told of his faults.

Beſides, that habitual wickedneſs is naturally apt to baniſh conſideration, to weaken our reſolution, and to diſcourage our hopes both of God's grace and aſſiſtance, and of his mercy and forgiveneſs, which are the beſt means and encouragement to repentance.

Sin is a great enemy to *Conſideration:* and eſpecially when men are deeply plunged into it, their condition is ſo very bad, that they are loth to think of it and to ſearch into it. A vicious man is a very deformed ſight, and to none more than to himſelf; and therefore he loves to turn his eyes another way, and to divert them as much as he can from looking upon himſelf. He is afraid to be alone, leſt his own mind ſhould arreſt him, and his Conſcience ſhould take the opportunity to call him to an account. And if at any time his own thoughts meet with him, and he cannot avoid conſideration, he is ready to ſay as *Ahab* did to *Elijah, Haſt thou found me, O my enemy!* and is as glad to ſhake it off as a man is to get rid of a Creditor, whom becauſe he knows not how to ſatisfie, he cares not to ſpeak with him. Conſideration is the great troubler and diſturber of men in an evil courſe, becauſe it would repreſent to them the plain truth of their caſe; and therefore they do all they can to keep it off, as thoſe who have improvidently managed their affairs, and been ill husbands of their eſtates, are loth to make up their accounts, leſt by that means they ſhould be forced to underſtand the worſt of their condition.

Or if conſideration happen to take them at an advantage, and they are ſo hard preſt by it that they cannot eſcape the ſight of their own condition, yet they find themſelves ſo miſerably entangled and hamper'd in an evil courſe, and bound ſo faſt in the chains of their own wickedneſs, that they know not how to get looſe. Sin is the ſaddeſt ſlavery in the World; it breaks and ſinks mens Spirits, and makes them ſo baſe and ſervile that they have not the courage to reſcue themſelves. No ſort of ſlaves are ſo poor ſpirited as they that are in bondage to their luſts. Their power is gone, or if they have any left they have not the heart to make uſe of it. And though they ſee and feel their Miſery, yet they chuſe rather to ſit down in it, and tamely to ſubmit to it, than to make any reſolute attempt for their Liberty. What the Prophet ſays of *Whoredom* and *Wine* is proportionably true of other vices, *they take away the heart.* Every luſt that we entertain deals with us as *Delilah* did with *Sampſon,* not only robs us of our ſtrength but leaves us faſt bound: ſo that if at any time we be awakened to a ſenſe of our condition, and try to reſcue our ſelves from it, we find that *our ſtrength is departed from us,* and that we are not able to break looſe.

And as long cuſtom and continuance in ſin deprives us of our ſtrength, ſo it diſcourageth our hopes, both of God's grace and aſſiſtance, and of his mercy and forgiveneſs. For why ſhould men expect the continuance of that grace which they have ſo often received in vain? After ſo many provocations, how can we look the offended Majeſty of God in the Face? how can we lift up our eyes to heaven with any hopes of mercy and forgiveneſs there? Deſpair doth almoſt naturally ſpring from an evil Conſcience: and when men are thorougly awakened to a ſenſe of ſin, and of the infinite evil of it, as they cannot eaſily forgive themſelves, ſo they can hardly believe that there is goodneſs enough any where to forgive them.

But beſides theſe diſadvantages, which are natural and conſequent upon a vicious courſe; by the juſt judgment of God, his Spirit is withdrawn from them, and they are given up to their own hearts luſts, to commit all iniquity with greedineſs. And then there is hardly any thing left, either to reſtrain them in their evil courſe, or to recover them out of it.

And not only ſo, but by the juſt permiſſion of God, as men grow worſe and more wicked, the Devil hath a nearer acceſs to them and a more immediate power over them. So the *Scripture* tells us, that wicked men are *led captive by Satan at his pleaſure,* and that the *evil one works* and acts *in the*

Children of diſobedience: They are as it were poſſeſt and inſpired by him. And what can be expected from this cruel and malicious enemy of mankind, but that he will continually be puſhing them on from one wickedneſs to another, till he drive them firſt into deſpair, and then, if God permit him, into eternal perdition?

And what a forlorn ſtate is this? when men are thus forſaken of God, and left without check, blindly and headily to follow the ſway of their own tempers, and the bent of their own corrupt hearts? when they are continually expoſed to temptations ſtrongly inviting them to evil; and God lets the Devil looſe upon them to manage thoſe temptations with his utmoſt skill, and to practiſe all his arts and wiles upon them? In theſe circumſtances men almoſt infallibly run into ſin, as ſure as men wander in the dark, and are in danger of falling in ſlippery places, and of being entangled when they continually walk in the midſt of ſnares cunningly laid for them. It is not in men thus diſabled and entangled, to order their own ſteps, and to reſtrain their inclinations and paſſions in the preſence of a powerful temptation. At the beſt, we need God's direction to guide us, his continual grace to uphold us, and to guard and preſerve us from evil; and much more do we ſtand in need of it, when we have brought our ſelves into theſe wretched circumſtances; but then alas! how little reaſon have we to hope for it?

Blind and miſerable men! that in deſpite of all the merciful warnings of God's word and providence, will run themſelves into this deſperate ſtate, and never think of returning to a better mind, till their retreat is difficult almoſt to an impoſſibility. I proceed to the

II. II. Head of my Diſcourſe, which was to ſhew that the caſe of theſe perſons, though it be extremely difficult, is not quite deſperate; but after all, there is ſome ground of hope and encouragement left that they may yet be reclaimed and brought to goodneſs. Indeed humanely ſpeaking, and according to all appearance and probability, the thing ſeems to be very hopeleſs, and next to an impoſſibility; but yet what our *Saviour* ſays concerning the difficulty of a rich man's Salvation will reach alſo to this caſe, though much more difficult; *thoſe things which are impoſſible with men are poſſible with God.*

And this will appear, if we conſider that even in the worſt of men there is ſomething left which tends to reclaim them, to awaken them to conſideration, and to urge and encourage them to a vigorous reſolution of a better courſe: And this accompanied with a powerful aſſiſtance of God's grace, which when ſincerely ſought is never to be deſpaired of, may prove effectual to bring back even the greateſt of ſinners.

1. There is left, even in the worſt of men, a natural ſenſe of the evil and unreaſonableneſs of ſin; which can hardly be ever totally extinguiſhed in humane nature. For though the habits of great vices are very apt to harden and ſtupifie men, ſo that they have ſeldom a juſt ſence of their evil ways, yet theſe perſons are ſometimes under ſtrong convictions, and their conſciences do ſeverely check and rebuke them for their faults. They are alſo, by fits, under great apprehenſion of the danger of their condition, and that the courſe which they are in, if they continue in it, will prove fatal to them, and ruine them at laſt: Eſpecially, when their conſciences are throughly awakened, by ſome great affliction, or the near approach of death and a lively ſenſe of another World. And the apprehenſion of a mighty danger will make men to look about them, and to uſe the beſt means to avoid it.

2. Very bad men when they have any thoughts of becoming better are apt to conceive ſome good hopes of God's grace and mercy. For though they find all the cauſes and reaſons of deſpair in themſelves, yet the conſideration of the boundleſs goodneſs and compaſſions of God (how undeſerved ſoever on their part) is apt to kindle ſome ſparks of hope, even in the moſt deſponding mind. His wonderful patience, in the midſt of our manifold provocations, cannot but be a good ſign to us, that he hath no mind that we ſhould periſh, but rather that we ſhould come to repentance; and if we do repent, we are aſſured by his promiſe, that we ſhall be forgiven. *He that confeſſeth and forſaketh his ſins ſhall have mercy. If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.*

3. Who knows what men throughly rouzed and ſtartled may reſolve, and do? And a mighty reſolution will break through difficulties which ſeem inſuperable. Though we be weak and pitiful Creatures; yet nature when it is mightily irritated and ſtirr'd will do ſtrange things. The reſolutions of men upon the brink of deſpair, have been of an incredible force: and the Soul of man in nothing more diſcovers its divine power and original, than in that ſpring which is in it whereby it recovers it ſelf when it is mightily urged and preſt. There is a ſort of reſolution which is in a manner invincible, and hardly any difficulty can reſiſt it or ſtand before it.

Of this there have been great inſtances in ſeveral kinds. Some by an obſtinate reſolution, and taking incredible pains with themſelves, have maſtered great natural vices and defects. As *Socrates* and *Demoſthenes*, who almoſt exceeded all mankind in thoſe two things for which by nature they ſeemed to be leaſt made, and moſt unfit. One, in governing of his paſſions, and the other in the mighty force and power of his eloquence.

Some, that by intemperance have brought themſelves to a Dropſie, which hath juſt ſet them upon the brink of the grave, by a bold and ſteady purpoſe to abſtain wholly from drink for a long time together, have reſcued themſelves from the jaws of death.

Some that had almoſt ruined themſelves by a careleſs and diſſolute life, and having run themſelves out of their eſtates into debt, and being caſt into priſon, have there taken up a manly reſolution to retrieve and recover themſelves; and by the indefatigable labour and ſtudy of ſome years, in that uncomfortable retreat, have maſtered the knowledge and skill of one of the moſt difficult Profeſſions, in which they have afterwards proved great and eminent.

And ſome, in the full career of a wicked courſe, have by a ſudden thought and reſolution, raiſed in them and aſſiſted by a mighty grace of God, taken up preſently and made an immediate change from great wickedneſs and impiety of life to a very exemplary degree of goodneſs and vertue.

The two great encouragements to vertue which *Pythagoras* gave to his Scholars were theſe; and they were worthy of ſo great a Philoſopher; *Firſt, Chuſe always the beſt courſe of life, and cuſtom will ſoon make it the moſt pleaſant.* The other was this, that *Power and Neceſſity are Neighbours* and *never dwell far from one another.* When men are preſt by a great neceſſity, when nature is ſpurr'd up and urged to the utmoſt, men diſcover in themſelves a power which they thought they had not, and find at laſt that they can do that which at firſt they deſpaired of ever being able to do.

4. The grace and aſſiſtance of God when ſincerely ſought, is never to be deſpaired of. So that if we do but heartily and in good earneſt reſolve

upon a better courſe and implore the help of God's grace to this purpoſe, no degree of it that is neceſſary ſhall be wanting to us. And here is our chief ground of hope. For we are *weak and unſtable as water*; and when we have taken up good reſolutions do eaſily ſtart from them. So that freſh ſupplies, and a continued aſſiſtance of God's grace is neceſſary to keep up the firſt warmth and vigour of our reſolutions, till they prove effectual and victorious. And this grace God hath promiſed he will not deny to us, when we are thus diſpoſed for it; that he *will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it*; that *he will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed, until he bring forth judgment unto victory.*

All that now remains is to apply this to our ſelves: And we are all concerned in it: For we ſhall all find our ſelves comprehended under one of theſe three Heads, Either we are of the number of thoſe few happy Perſons, who by the influence and advantage of a good education were never engaged in a bad courſe: Or, of thoſe who have been drawn into vice, but are not yet far gone in it: Or, of thoſe who have been long accuſtomed to an evil courſe, and are grown old and ſtiff in it.

The firſt of theſe having great cauſe to thank God for this ſingular felicity, that they were never enſnared and intangled in vicious habits, that they have not had the trial of their own weakneſs under this miſerable ſlavery, that they never knew what it was to be out of their own power, to have loſt their liberty and the Government of themſelves. When we hear of the miſerable ſervitude of the poor Chriſtians in *Turkey*, we are apt, as there is great reaſon, to pity them, and to think what a bleſſing of God it is to us that we are not in their condition: And yet *that* ſlavery is not comparable to *this*, either for the ſad nature, or the diſmal *conſequences* of it; or for the difficulty of being releaſed from it. And let ſuch perſons, who have been thus happy never to have been engaged in an evil courſe, preſerve their innocency with great tenderneſs and care, as the greateſt Jewel in the World. No Man knows what he does, and what a foundation of trouble he lays to himſelf, when he forfeits his innocency, and breaks the peace of his own mind; when he yields to a Temptation, and makes the firſt ſtep into a bad courſe. He little thinks whither his luſts may hurry him, and what a monſter they may make of him before they have done with him.

2. Thoſe who have been ſeduced, but are not yet deeply engaged in an evil courſe, let them make a ſpeedy retreat, leſt they put it for ever out of their power to return. Perhaps their feet only are yet enſnared, but their hands are at liberty, and they have ſome power left, whereby with an ordinary grace of God they may looſe and reſcue themſelves. But after a while their hands may be manacled, and all their power may be gone; and when they are thus *bound hand and foot*, they are juſt prepared, and in danger every moment, *to be caſt into utter darkneſs.*

3. As for thoſe, who are gone very far and are grown old in vice, who can forbear to lament over them? for they are a ſad ſpectacle indeed, and the trueſt object of pity in the World. And yet, *their* recovery is not utterly to be deſpaired of; for *with God it is poſſible.* The Spirit of God, which hath withdrawn himſelf, or rather hath been driven away by them, may yet be perſuaded to return and to undertake them once more, if they would but ſeriouſly reſolve upon a change, and heartily beg God's aſſiſtance to that purpoſe. If we would take up a mighty reſolution, we might hope that God would afford a miraculous grace to ſecond it, and make it effectu-

al to our recovery. Even in this perverſe and degenerate Age in which we live, God hath not been wanting to give ſome miraculous inſtances of his grace and mercy to ſinners, and thoſe perhaps equal to any of thoſe we meet with in Scripture, of *Manaſſes*, or *Mary Magdalen*, or the *penitent Thief*; both for the greatneſs of the offenders, and the miracle of their change: To the end that none might deſpair, and for want of the encouragement of an example equal to their own caſe, be diſheartened from ſo noble an enterpriſe. I am loth to put you in mind how bad ſome have been, who yet have been *ſnatched as Firebrands out of the fire*; and that in ſo ſtrange a manner, that it would even amaze a Man to think of the wonder of their recovery: thoſe who have ſunk themſelves into the very depth of infidelity and wickedneſs, have by a mighty hand and out-ſtretched arm of God been pluckt out of this horrible Pit. And will we ſtill ſtand it out with God, when ſuch great Leaders have given up the cauſe, and have ſurrendred and yielded up themſelves willing Captives to the grace of God? that omnipotent grace of God, which can eaſily ſubdue the ſtouteſt heart of Man, by letting in ſo ſtrong a light upon our minds, and pouring ſuch terrible convictions into our conſciences, that we can find no eaſe but in turning to God.

I hope there are none here ſo bad, as to need all the encouragement to repentance which ſuch examples might give them: encouragement I ſay to repentance: for ſurely theſe examples can encourage no Man to venture any farther in a wicked courſe: they are ſo very rare, and like the inſtances of thoſe who have been brought back to life after the ſentence of death ſeemed to have been fully executed upon them.

But perhaps ſome will not believe that there have been ſuch examples; or if they have, they impute all this either to a diſturbed imagination, or to the faint and low ſpirits of men under great bodily weakneſs, or to their natural cowardize and fear; or to I know not what fooliſh and fantaſtical deſign of compleating and finiſhing a wicked life with an hypocritical death. Nothing ſurely is eaſier than to put ſome bad conſtruction upon the beſt things, and ſo ſlurr even repentance it ſelf, and almoſt daſh it out of countenance by ſome bold, and perhaps witty ſaying about it. But oh that Men were wiſe; oh that Men were wiſe! that they underſtood, and would conſider their latter end! Come, let us neither trifle, nor diſſemble in this matter; I dare ſay every man's Conſcience is convinced, that they who have led very ill lives have ſo much reaſon for repentance, that we may eaſily believe it to be real. However, of all things in the world, let us not make a mock of repentance; that which muſt be our laſt ſanctuary and refuge, and which we muſt all come to before we die, or *it had been better for us we had never been born.* Therefore, *let my counſel be acceptable unto you, break off your ſins by repentance,* and *your iniquities by righteouſneſs:* And that inſtantly, and without delay; *leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of ſin.* If we have been enſlaved but a little to a vicious courſe, we ſhall find it a task difficult enough to aſſert our own liberty, to *break theſe bonds in ſunder and to caſt theſe cords from us:* But if we have been long under this bondage, we have done ſo much to undo our ſelves, and to make our caſe deſperate, that it is God's infinite mercy to us that there is yet hope. Therefore, *give glory to the Lord your God, before he cauſe darkneſs, and your feet ſtumble upon the dark mountains, and while you look for light, he turn it into darkneſs and the ſhadow of death.* I will conclude with that encouraging invitation, even to the greateſt of ſinners to repentance, from the mouth of God himſelf, *Iſa.* 55. *Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and*

and your Soul ſhall live : ſeek the Lord while he may be found ; and call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.

To him let us apply our ſelves, and humbly beſeech him, *who is mighty to ſave,* that he would ſtretch forth the right hand of his power for our deliverance, from this miſerable and cruel bondage of our luſts : and that *as the rain cometh down from Heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud* ; ſo he would grant that *his word may not return void, but accompliſh his pleaſure, and proſper in the thing to which he ſent it* ; For his mercy ſake in Jeſus Chriſt, *To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory now and for ever.* Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XXX.

THE
Neceſſity of the Knowledge
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES.

MATTHEW xxiii. 13.

Woe unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men; and ye neither go in your ſelves, neither ſuffer ye them that are entring to go in.

THE *Scribes* ſo often mentioned in the *Goſpel*, were the great Doctors among the *Jews*, the Teachers and Interpreters of the Law of God. And becauſe many of them were of the Sect of the *Phariſees*, which above all others pretended to skill and knowledge in the Law, therefore it is that our bleſſed *Saviour* do's ſo often put the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* together. And theſe were the men of chief Authority in the *Jewiſh* Church; who equalled their own unwritten word and traditions with the Law of God: Nay our *Saviour* tells us, *they made the Commandments of God of none effect by their traditions.* They did in effect aſſume to themſelves *infallibility*; and all that oppoſed and contradicted them they branded with the odious name of *Hereticks.* Againſt theſe our *Saviour* denounceth this Woe here in the *Text*, *Woe unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*, &c.

All the difficulty in the words is what is here meant by *ſhutting up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men:* St. *Luke* expreſſeth it more plainly, *Ye have taken away the key of knowledge, ye entred not in your ſelves, and them that were entring in, ye hindered.* By putting theſe two expreſſions together we ſhall the more eaſily come at the meaning of the *Text*. *Ye have taken away the key of knowledge*, and *have ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men.* This Metaphor of the *key of knowledge* is undoubtedly an alluſion to that known cuſtom among the *Jews* in the admiſſion of their Doctors. For to whomſoever they gave Authority to interpret the Law and the Prophets, they were ſolemnly admitted into that office by delivering to them a *Key* and a *Table-Book*. So that by the *key of knowledge* is here meant the interpretation and underſtanding of the Scriptures; and by *taking away the key of knowledge*, not only that they arrogated to themſelves alone the underſtanding of the Scriptures, but likewiſe that they had conveyed away this key of knowledge, and as it were hid it out of the way, neither uſing it themſelves as they ought, nor ſuffering others to make uſe of it.

And thus they *ſhut the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*; which is very fitly ſaid of thoſe who have locked the door againſt them that were going in, and have taken away the key. By all which it appears that the plain meaning of our *Saviour* in theſe Metaphorical expreſſions is, that the *Scribes* and Teachers of the Law, under a pretence of interpreting the Scriptures, had perverted them and kept the true knowledge of them from the People: Eſpecially thoſe Prophecies of the *Old Teſtament* which concerned the *Meſſias*. And by this means the Kingdom of Heaven was ſhut againſt men: And they not only rejected the truth themſelves, but by keeping men in ignorance of the true meaning of the Scriptures, they hindered many from embracing our *Saviour*'s Doctrine, and entring into the Kingdom of Heaven, who were otherwiſe well enough diſpoſed for it.

Having thus explained the words, I ſhall from the main ſcope and deſign of them obſerve to you theſe two things.

1. The Neceſſity of the knowledge of the holy Scriptures in order to our eternal Salvation. It is called by our Saviour *the key of knowledge*, that which lets men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

2. The great and inexcuſable fault of thoſe who deprive the People of the knowledge of the holy Scriptures. They *ſhut the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*, and do what in them lies to hinder their eternal Salvation; and therefore our *Saviour* denounceth ſo heavy a Woe againſt them.

I ſhall ſpeak briefly to theſe two *Obſervations*; and then apply them to thoſe who are principally concerned in them.

I. I. *Firſt*, I obſerve hence the Neceſſity of the knowledge of the holy Scriptures in order to our eternal Salvation. This is by our *Saviour* called *the key of knowledge*, that which lets men into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Knowledge is neceſſary to Religion: It is neceſſary to the Being of it; and neceſſary to the life and practice of it. *Without Faith* (ſays the *Apoſtle*) it is *impoſſible to pleaſe God*: Becauſe Faith is an act of the underſtanding, and do's neceſſarily ſuppoſe ſome knowledge and apprehenſion of what we believe. To all acts of Religion there is neceſſarily required ſome act of the Underſtanding; ſo that without knowledge there can be no devotion in the ſervice of God, no obedience to his Laws. Religion begins in the Underſtanding, and from thence deſcends upon the heart and life. *If ye know theſe things* (ſays our *Saviour*) *happy are ye if ye do them*. We muſt firſt know God, before we can worſhip him; and underſtand what is his will, before we can do it.

This is ſo very evident, that one would think there needed no diſcourſe about it. And yet there are ſome in the World that cry up Ignorance as the Mother of Devotion. And to ſhew that we do not wrong them in this matter, Mr. *Ruſhworth* in his *Dialogues* (a *Book* in great vogue among the *Papiſts* here in *England*) does expreſly reckon up *Ignorance* among *the Parents of Religion*. And can any thing be ſaid more abſurdly and more to the diſparagement of Religion, than to derive the pedigree of the moſt excellent thing in the World from ſo obſcure and ignoble an Original; and to make that which the Scripture calls *the beginning of wiſdom*, and *the excellency of knowledge*, to be the Off-ſpring of Ignorance and a Child of darkneſs? Ignorance

rance indeed may be the cauſe of wonder and admiration, and the mother of folly and ſuperſtition: But ſurely Religion is of a nobler Extraction, and is the iſſue and reſult of the beſt wiſdom and knowledge; and deſcends from above, from the giver of every good and perfect gift, even the father of lights.

And as knowledge in general is neceſſary to Religion, ſo more particularly the knowledge of the *Holy Scriptures* is neceſſary to our eternal Salvation. Becauſe theſe are the great and ſtanding Revelation of God to mankind; wherein the Nature of God, and his Will concerning our duty and the terms and conditions of our eternal happineſs in another World are fully and plainly declared to us.

The Scriptures are the Word of God; and from whence can we learn the Will of God ſo well as from his own mouth? They are the great inſtrument of our Salvation; and ſhould not every man be acquainted with that which alone can perfectly inſtruct him what he muſt believe, and what he muſt do that he may be ſaved? This is the teſtimony which the Scripture gives of it ſelf, that it is *able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation*: And is it not very fit that every man ſhould have this wiſdom, and in order thereunto the free uſe of that *Book* from whence this wiſdom is to be learned?

II. II. *Secondly*, I obſerve the great and inexcuſable fault of thoſe who keep men in ignorance of Religion, and take away from them ſo excellent and neceſſary a means of divine knowledge as the *Holy Scriptures* are. This our *Saviour* calls *taking away the key of knowledge, and ſhutting the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*. That is, doing what in them lies to render it impoſſible for men to be ſaved. For this he denounceth a terrible *Woe* againſt the Teachers of the *Jewiſh* Church: Though they did not proceed ſo far as to deprive men of the uſe of the *Holy Scriptures*, but only of the right knowledge and underſtanding of them. This alone is a horrible impiety, to lead men into a falſe ſenſe and interpretation of Scripture, but much greater to forbid them the reading of it. This is to ſtop knowledge at the very Fountain-head; and not only to lead men into Errour, but to take away from them all poſſibility of rectifying their miſtakes. And can there be a greater ſacrilege, than to rob men of the Word of God, the beſt means in the World of acquainting them with the Will of God and their duty, and the way to eternal happineſs? To keep the people in Ignorance of that which is neceſſary to ſave them, is *to judge them unworthy of eternal life*, and to declare it does not belong to them, and maliciouſly to contrive the eternal ruine and deſtruction of their Souls.

To lock up the *Scriptures* and the *ſervice of God* from the people in an unknown tongue, what is this but in effect to forbid men to know God and to ſerve him; to render them incapable of knowing what *is the good and acceptable will of God*; of joyning in his worſhip, or performing any part of it, or receiving any benefit or edification from it; And what is, if this be not, to ſhut the Kingdom of Heaven againſt men? This is ſo outragious a cruelty to the ſouls of men, that it is not to be excuſed upon any pretence whatſoever: This is to take the ſureſt and moſt effectual way in the world *to deſtroy thoſe for whom Chriſt died*, and directly to thwart the great deſign of God *our Saviour, who would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*. Men may miſcarry with their knowledge, but they are ſure to periſh for want of it.

The beſt things in the World have their inconveniences attending them, and are liable to be abuſed; but ſurely men are not to be ruined and damned for fear of abuſing their knowledge, or for the prevention of any other inconvenience whatſoever. Beſides, this is to croſs the very end of the Scriptures, and the deſign of God in inſpiring men to write them. Can any man think that God ſhould ſend this great light of his Word into the world, for the Prieſts to *hide it under a Buſhel*; and not rather that it ſhould be ſet up to the greateſt advantage for the enlightening of the world? St. *Paul* tells us, *Rom.* 15. 4. That *whatſoever things were written, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* And 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. *That all Scripture is given by inſpiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs.* And if the Scriptures were written for theſe ends, can any man have the face to pretend that they do not concern the people as well as their teachers? Nay St. *Paul* expreſly tells the Church of *Rome*, that they were written for their learning, however it happens that they are not now permitted to make uſe of them. Are the *Scriptures* ſo uſeful and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs? and why may they not be uſed by the people for thoſe ends for which they were given? 'Tis true indeed they are fit for the moſt knowing and learned, and ſufficient to make *the man of God perfect, and throughly furniſhed to every good work* (as the *Apoſtle* there tells us.) But does this exclude their being profitable alſo to the people; who may reaſonably be preſumed to ſtand much more in need of all means and helps of inſtruction than their Teachers? And though there be many difficulties and obſcurities in the Scriptures, enough to exerciſe the skill and wit of the learned, yet are they not therefore either uſeleſs or dangerous to the People. The ancient Fathers of the Church were of another mind. St. *Chryſoſtome* tells us that, "Whatever things are neceſſary "are manifeſt in the Scriptures. And St. *Auſtin*, that all things are "plain in the Scripture, which concern faith and a good life; and that "thoſe things which are neceſſary to the Salvation of men, are not ſo hard "to be come at, but that as to thoſe things which the Scripture plainly contains, it ſpeaks without diſguiſe like a familiar friend to the heart of the "learned and unlearned. And upon theſe and ſuch like conſiderations, the *Fathers* did every-where in their *Orations* and *Homilies* charge and exhort the people to be converſant in the Holy Scriptures, to read them daily and diligently and attentively. And I challenge our *Adverſaries* to ſhew me where any of the ancient *Fathers* do diſcourage the people from reading the Scriptures, much leſs forbid them ſo to do. So that they who do it now have no Cloak for their ſin: And they who pretend ſo confidently to *Antiquity* in other caſes, are by the evidence of truth forced to acknowledge that it is againſt them in this. Though they have ten thouſand *Schoolmen* on their ſide, yet have they not one Father, not the leaſt pretence of Scripture, or rag of Antiquity to cover their nakedneſs in this point.

With great reaſon then does our *Saviour* denounce ſo heavy a *Woe* againſt ſuch teachers. Of old in the like caſe God by his *Prophet* ſeverely threatens the Prieſts of the *Jewiſh Church*, for not inſtructing the people in the knowledge of God, *Hoſea* 4. 6. *My people are deſtroyed for lack of knowledge: becauſe thou haſt rejected knowledge, I will alſo reject thee; thou ſhalt be no more a Prieſt to me: ſeeing thou haſt forgotten the Law of thy God, I will alſo forget thy Children.* God, you ſee, lays the ruine of ſo many Souls at their doors, and will require their blood at their hands. So many as periſh for want of knowledge, and eternally miſcarry by being deprived of the neceſſary means of Salvation, their deſtruction ſhall be charged upon thoſe who *have taken away the key of knowledge, and ſhut the kingdom of heaven againſt men.*

And it is juſt with God to puniſh ſuch perſons, not only as the occaſion, but as the Authors of their ruine. For who can judge otherwiſe, but that they who deprive men of the neceſſary means to any end, do purpoſely deſign to hinder them of attaining that end? And whatever may be pretended in this caſe; to deprive men of the Holy Scriptures, and to keep them ignorant of the ſervice of God, and yet while they do ſo, to make a ſhew of an earneſt deſire of their Salvation, is juſt ſuch a mockery, as if one of you that is a maſter ſhould tell his prentice how much you deſire he ſhould thrive in the world, and be a rich man, but all the while keeps him ignorant of his trade in order to his being rich; and with the ſtricteſt care imaginable conceals from him the beſt means of learning that whereby alone he is likely to thrive and get an eſtate. *Woe unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites.*

By what hath been diſcourſed upon this Argument, you will eaſily perceive where the Application is like to fall. For the *Woe* denounced by our Saviour here in the *Text* againſt the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, falls every whit as heavy upon the *Paſtors* and *Teachers* of the *Roman* Church. They have taken away the key of knowledge with a witneſs; not only depriving the people of the right underſtanding of the Scriptnres, but of the very uſe of them: As if they were ſo afraid they ſhould underſtand them, that they dare not ſuffer them ſo much as to be acquainted with them.

This Tyranny *that* Church hath exerciſed over thoſe of her Communion for ſeveral hundreds of years. It grew upon them indeed by degrees: For as by the inundation of *Barbarous* Nations upon the *Roman* Empire the *Romans* loſt their Language by degrees, ſo the Governours of that Church ſtill kept up the Scriptures and the ſervice of God in the *Latin tongue*; which at laſt was wholly unknown to the common people. And about the *ninth* and *tenth Centuries*, when by the general conſent of all their own *Hiſtorians* groſs darkneſs and ignorance covered this part of the world, the *Pope* and the *Prieſts* took away the *key of knowledge*, and did (as I may ſo ſay) put it under the door for ſeveral Ages; till the *Reformation* fetched it out again, and rubbed off the ruſt of it.

And I profeſs ſeriouſly that hardly any thing in the world, was ever to me more aſtoniſhing, than this uncharitable and cruel uſage of the people in the Church of *Rome*. And I cannot tell which to wonder at moſt, the inſolence of their Governours in impoſing upon men this ſenſleſs way of ſerving God, or the patience ſhall I call it, or rather ſtupidity of the people in enduring to be ſo intolerably abuſed. Why ſhould reaſonable Creatures be treated at this rude and barbarous rate? As if they were unworthy to be acquainted with the Will of God; and as if that which every man ought to do, were not fit for every man to know: As if the common people had only Bodies to be preſent at the ſervice of God, but no Souls; or as if they were all diſtracted and out of their wits, and it were a dangerous thing to let in the light upon them.

But to ſpeak more diſtinctly. There are *two* things we charge them withall, and which they are not able to deny. Their performing the publick *ſervice of God* in an unknown Tongue; and depriving the People of the uſe of the *Scriptures*. And I ſhall firſt tell you what we have to ſay againſt theſe things, and then conſider what they pretend for them.

1. As for their performing the ſervice of God in a tongue unknown to the People. And I begin with St. *Paul*, who in his firſt *Epiſtle* to the *Corinthians* hath a whole Chapter on purpoſe to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this thing, and how contrary it is to the edification of *Chriſtians*. His diſcourſe

is ſo plain and ſo well known, that I ſhall not particularly inſiſt upon it. *Eraſmus*, in his *Annotations* upon this *Chapter*, breaks out, (as well he might) into admiration at the practice of the Church of *Rome* in his time. *Hac in re, mirum quam mutata ſit Eccleſiæ conſuetudo:* "It is wonderful (ſays he) how the cuſtom of the Church is altered in this matter. St. *Paul had rather ſpeak five words with underſtanding, and ſo as to teach others, than ten thouſand in an unknown tongue.* Why do's the Church doubt to follow ſo great an Authority, or rather how dares ſhe to diſſent from it?

As for the practice of the ancient Church let *Origen* bear witneſs. "The *Grecians* (ſaith he) in their prayers uſe the *Greek*, and the *Romans* the *Latin* tongue; and ſo every one according to his Language prayeth unto God, and praiſeth him as he is able.

And not only in *Origen*'s time, but for more than the firſt ſix hundred years, the ſervice of God was always performed in a known Tongue. And this the learned men of their own Church do not deny. And Cardinal *Cajetan* (as *Caſſander* tells us) ſaid it was much better this Cuſtom were reſtored; and being reproved for ſaying ſo, he ſaid he learned it from St. *Paul.* And *Bellarmine* himſelf confeſſeth that the *Armenians*, *Egyptians*, *Ethiopians*, *Ruſſians*, and others do uſe their own Language in their Liturgies at this day.

But it is otherwiſe now in the Church of *Rome*, and hath been for ſeveral Ages. And it ſeems they lay great ſtreſs upon it, not only as a thing of great Uſe, but Neceſſity. For Pope *Gregory* the VII. forbids the Prince of *Bohemia* to permit to the People the celebration of divine Offices in the *Sclavonian* Tongue; and commands him to oppoſe them herein with all his Forces. It ſeems he thought it a cauſe worthy the fighting for: and that it were much better the People ſhould be killed, than ſuffered to undeſtand their prayers.

But let us reaſon this matter a little calmly with them. Is it neceſſary for men to underſtand any thing they do in Religion? And is not prayer one of the moſt ſolemn parts of Religion? and why then ſhould not men underſtand their Prayers as well as any thing elſe they do in Religion? Is it good that people ſhould underſtand their private Prayers? (that we thank them) they allow: and why not publick as well? Is there leſs of Religion in publick Prayers? Is God leſs honoured by them? or are we not as capable of being edified and of having our hearts and affections moved and excited by them? Where then lies the difference? The more I conſider it the more I am at a loſs what tolerable reaſon any man can give why people ſhould not underſtand their publick devotions as well as their private. If men cannot heartily and devoutly pray alone, without underſtanding what they ask of God, no more (ſay I) can they heartily and devoutly join in the publick Prayers which are made by the Prieſt without undeſtanding what they are If it be enough for the Prieſt to underſtand them, why ſhould not the Prieſt only be preſent at them? unleſs the people do not meet to worſhip God, but only to wait upon the Prieſt. But by ſaying the Prieſt underſtands them, it ſeems it is better ſome body ſhould underſtand them than not; and why is not that which is good for the Prieſt good for the People?

So that the true ſtate of the *Controverſie* is, whether it be fit that the people ſhould be edified in the ſervice of God; and whether it be fit the Church ſhould order things contrary to edification? For it is plain that the ſervice of God in an unknown tongue is uſeleſs and unprofitable to the People: Nay, it is evidently no publick ſervice of God, when the Prieſt only underſtands it. For how can they be ſaid to be *publick Prayers* if the People do not join in them? and how can they joyn in that they do not underſtand? and to what purpoſe are *Leſſons* of *Scripture* read, if People are to learn nothing by them? and how ſhould they learn when they do not underſtand? This is as if one ſhould pretend to teach a man *Greek*, by reading him Lectures every day out of an *Arabick* and *Perſian* Book, of which he underſtands not one ſyllable.

II. As to their depriving the people of the uſe of the *Holy Scriptures*. Our bleſſed *Saviour* exhorts the *Jews* to *ſearch the Scriptures*; And St. *Paul* chargeth the Chriſtians that *the word of God ſhould dwell richly in them*; And the ancient *Fathers* of the Church do moſt frequently and earneſtly recommend to the People the reading and ſtudy of the Scriptures: How comes the caſe now to be ſo altered? Sure the word of God is not changed: that certainly abides and continues the ſame for ever.

I ſhall by and by examine what the Church of *Rome* pretends in excuſe of this Sacrilege. In the mean time I do not ſee what conſiderable Objections can be made againſt the People's reading of the Scriptures, which would not have held as well againſt the writing and publiſhing of them at firſt in a Language underſtood by the People: As the *Old Teſtament* was by the *Jews*, and the *Epiſtles* of the *Apoſtles* by the *Churches* to whom they were written, and the *Goſpels* both by *Jews* and *Greeks*. Were there no difficulties and obſcurities then in the *Scriptures*, capable of being wreſted by the unſtable and unlearned? Were not people then liable to errour, and was there no danger of Hereſie in thoſe Times? And yet theſe are their great Objections againſt putting the Scriptures into the hands of the People. Which is juſt like their arguing againſt giving the Cup to the Laity from the inconveniency of their *beards*, leſt ſome of the conſecrated Wine ſhould be ſpilt upon them: As if *errours* and *beards* were inconveniences lately ſprung up in the world, and which mankind were not liable to in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity.

But if there were the ſame dangers and inconveniences in all Ages, this Reaſon makes againſt the publiſhing of the Scriptures to the people at firſt, as much as againſt permitting them the uſe of them now. And in truth all theſe Objections are againſt the Scripture it ſelf: And that which the Church of *Rome* would find fault with if they durſt, is that there ſhould be any ſuch *Book* in the world, and that it ſhould be in any bodies hands, learned or unlearned; for if it be dangerous to any, none are ſo capable of doing miſchief with it as men of wit and learning. So that at the bottom, if they would ſpeak out, the quarrel is againſt the Scriptures themſelves. This is too evident by the counſel given to Pope *Julius* the III. by the Biſhops met at *Bononia* to conſult about the eſtabliſhment of the *Roman* See: Where among other things they give this as their laſt advice, and as the greateſt and weightieſt of all, *That by all means as little of the Goſpel as might be, eſpecially in the Vulgar Tongue, ſhould be read to the people; and* that *little which was in the* Maſs *ought to be ſufficient: neither ſhould it be permitted to any mortal to read more. For ſo long* (ſay they) *as men were contented with that little, all things went well with them; but quite otherwiſe, ſince more was commonly read.* And ſpeaking of the Scripture, they give this remarkable teſtimony and commendation of it; *This in ſhort is that Book which, above all others, hath raiſed thoſe tempeſts and whirlwinds which we were almoſt carried away with. And in truth, if any one diligently conſiders it, and compares it with what is done in our Church, he will find them very contrary to each other, and our Doctrin not only to be very different from it, but repugnant to it.* If this be the caſe, they do like the reſt of the Children of this world prudently enough in their Generation: Can we blame 'em for being againſt the

Scriptures, when the Scriptures are acknowledged to be ſo clearly againſt them? But ſurely no body that conſidereth theſe things would be of that Church, which is brought by the undeniable evidence of the things themſelves to this ſhamefull confeſſion, *that* ſeveral of their Doctrines and Practices are very contrary to the Word of God.

Much more might have been ſaid againſt the practice of the Church of *Rome* in theſe two particulars, but this is ſufficient.

I ſhall in the *ſecond* place conſider, what is pretended for them. And indeed what can be pretended in juſtification of ſo contumelious an affront to mankind, ſo great a Tyranny and cruelty to the Souls of men? hath God forbidden the People to look into the Scriptures? No; quite contrary. Was it the practice of the ancient Church to lay this reſtraint upon men; or to celebrate the ſervice of God in an unknown Tongue? our adverſaries themſelves have not the face to pretend this. I ſhall truly repreſent the ſubſtance of what they ſay in theſe *two* points.

I. As to the ſervice of God in an unknown tongue they ſay theſe *four* things for themſelves.

1. That the people do exerciſe a general devotion, and come with an intention to ſerve God; and that is accepted, though they do not particularly underſtand the prayers that are made, and the leſſons that are read.

But is this all that is intended in the ſervice of God? do's not St. *Paul* expreſly require more? *that* the underſtanding of the people ſhould be edified by the particular ſervice that is performed? And if what is done be not particularly underſtood, he tells us the People are not edified, nor can ſay *Amen* to the prayers and thankſgivings that are put up to God; and that any man that ſhould come in and find people ſerving of God in this unprofitable and unreaſonable manner would conclude that they were mad.

And if there be any general devotion in the people, it is becauſe in general they underſtand what they are about; and why may they not as well underſtand the particular ſervice that is performed, that ſo they might exerciſe a particular devotion? So that they are devout no farther than they underſtand; and conſequently as to what they do not underſtand, had every whit as good be abſent.

2. They ſay, the prayers are to God, and he underſtands them; and that is enough. But what harm were it, if all they that pray underſtood them alſo? Or indeed how can men pray to God without underſtanding what they ask of him? Is not prayer a part of the Chriſtian worſhip? and is not that a reaſonable ſervice? and is any ſervice reaſonable that is not directed by our underſtandings, and accompanied with our hearts and affections?

But then what ſay they to the *Leſſons* and Exhortations of Scripture, which are likewiſe read to the People in an unknown tongue? Are theſe directed to God, or to the people only? And are they not deſigned by God for their inſtruction; and read either to that purpoſe or to none? And is it poſſible to inſtruct men by what they do not underſtand? This is a new and wonderful way of teaching, by concealing from the people the things which they ſhould learn. Is it not all one, as to all purpoſes of edification, as if the Scriptures were not read, or any thing elſe in the place of them? as they many times do their Legends, which the wiſer ſort among them do not believe when they read them. For all things are alike to them that underſtand none; as all things are of a colour in the dark. Ignorance knows no difference of things; it is only knowledge that can diſtinguiſh.

3. They ſay that ſome do, at leaſt in ſome meaſure, underſtand the particular prayers. If they do, that is no thanks to them. It is by accident if they are more knowing than the reſt; and more than the Church either deſires or intends. For if they deſired it, they might order their ſervice ſo, as every man might underſtand it.

4. They ſay that it is convenient that God ſhould be ſerved and worſhipped in the ſame Language all the world over. Convenient for whom: For *God?* or for the *People?* Not for *God* ſurely. For he underſtands all other Languages as well as *Latin*, and for any thing we know to the contrary likes them as well. And certainly it cannot be ſo convenient for the *People*, becauſe they generally underſtand no Language but their own; and it is very inconvenient they ſhould not underſtand what they do in the Service of God. But perhaps they mean that it is convenient for the *Roman* Church to have it ſo; becauſe this will look like an argument that they are the *Catholick* or univerſal Church, when the Language which was originally theirs ſhall be the univerſal Language in which all Nations ſhall ſerve God; and by this means alſo they may bring all Nations to be of their Religion, and yet make them never the wiſer; and this is a very great convenience, becauſe knowledge is a troubleſome thing, and ignorance very quiet and peaceable, rending men fit to be governed, and unfit to diſpute.

II. As to their depriving the people of the Scriptures, the ſumm of what they ſay may be reduced to theſe *three* Heads.

1. That the Church can give leave to men to read the Scriptures. But this not without great trouble and difficulty: there muſt be a Licence for it under the hand of the Biſhop or Inquiſitor, by the Advice of the Prieſt or Confeſſor, concerning the fitneſs of the Perſon that deſires this Privilege; And we may be ſure they will think none fit, but thoſe of whom they have the greateſt confidence and ſecurity: And whoever preſumes to do it otherwiſe, is to be denied abſolution; which is, as much as in them lies, to damn men for preſuming to read the Word of God without their leave.

And, whatever they may allow here in *England*, where they hold their people upon more ſlippery terms, yet this privilege is very rarely granted where they are in full poſſeſſion of their power, and have the people perfectly under their Yoke.

2. They tell us they inſtruct the people otherwiſe. This indeed were ſomething if they did it to purpoſe; but generally they do it very ſparingly and ſlightly. Their Sermons are commonly made up of feigned ſtories and miracles of *Saints*, and exhortations to the worſhip of them, (and eſpecially of the bleſſed *Virgin*) and of their Images and Relicks. And for the truth of this I appeal to the innumerable Volumes of their *Sermons* and *Poſtils* in print; which I ſuppoſe are none of their worſt. I am ſure *Eraſmus* ſays that in his time in ſeveral Countries the People did ſcarce once in half a year hear a profitable Sermon to exhort them to true piety. Indeed they allow the people ſome *Catechiſms* and *Manuals* of devotion; and yet in many of them they have the conſcience and the confidence to *ſteal away the ſecond Commandment* in the face of the *eighth*.

But, to bring the matter to a point, if thoſe helps of inſtruction are agreeable to the Scriptures, why are they ſo afraid the people ſhould read the Scriptures? if they are not, why do they deceive and delude them?

3. They ſay that people are apt to wreſt the Scriptures to their own deſtruction, and that the promiſcuous uſe of them hath been the great occaſion of Hereſies. It cannot be denied to be the condition of the very beſt things in the world, that they are liable to be abuſed: health and light and liberty, as

well as knowledge. But muſt all theſe be therefore taken away? This very inconvenience of peoples wreſting the Scriptures to their own ruin St. *Peter* takes notice of in his days; but he does not therefore forbid men the reading of them, as his more prudent Succeſſours have done ſince. Suppoſe the reading of the Scriptures hath been the occaſion of Hereſies; were there ever more than in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity? and yet neither the Apoſtles nor their Succeſſours ever preſcribed this remedy. But are they in earneſt? muſt not men know the truth for fear of falling into Errour? Becauſe men may poſſibly miſs their way at noon-day, muſt they never travel but in the night, when they are ſure to loſe it?

And when all is done, this is not true, that Hereſies have ſprung from this cauſe. They have generally been broached by the learned, from whom the Scriptures neither were, nor could be concealed. And for this I appeal to the Hiſtory and Experience of all Ages. I am well aſſured the ancient Fathers were of another mind. *St. Chryſoſtome* ſays, *If men would be converſant in the Scriptures and attend to them, they would not only not fall into errours themſelves, but reſcue thoſe that are deceived:* And that *the Scriptures would inſtruct men both in right opinions and a good life.* And St. *Hierome* more expreſly to our purpoſe. That *infinite evils ariſe from the Ignorance of the Scriptures*; and *that from that cauſe the moſt part of Hereſies have come.*

But if what they ſay were true, is not this to lay the blame of all the ancient Hereſies upon the ill management of things by our *Saviour*, and his *Apoſtles*, and the holy *Fathers* of the Church for ſo many Ages, and their imprudent diſpenſing of the Scriptures to the people? This indeed is to charge the matter home; and yet this conſequence is unavoidable. For the Church of *Rome* cannot juſtifie the piety and prudence of their preſent practices, without accuſing all theſe.

But the thing which they mainly rely upon as to both theſe practices is this. That though theſe things were otherwiſe in the *Apoſtles* times, and in the *Ancient Church*, yet the Church hath power to alter them according to the exigence and circumſtances of time. I have purpoſely reſerved this for the laſt place, becauſe it is their laſt refuge; and if this fail them they are gone.

To ſhew the weakneſs of this pretence, we will, if they pleaſe, take it for granted, that the Governours of the Church have in no Age more power, than the Apoſtles had in theirs. Now St. *Paul* tells us, 2 *Cor.* 10. 8. that the Authority which the Apoſtles had given them from the Lord, was only *for edification but not for deſtruction*: And the ſame St. *Paul* makes it the buſineſs of a whole *Chapter* to ſhew that the performing the publick ſervice of God God, and particularly Praying in an unknown Tongue, are contrary to edification; from which premiſes the concluſion is plain, That the *Apoſtles* themſelves had no Authority to appoint the ſervice of God to be performed in an unknown Tongue; and ſurely it is Arrogance for the Church in any Age to pretend greater Authority than the Apoſtles had.

This is the ſumm of what our *Adverſaries* ſay in juſtification of themſelves in theſe points. And there is no doubt, but that men of wit and confidence will always make a ſhift to ſay ſomething for any thing: and ſome way or other blanch over the blackeſt and moſt abſurd things in the world. But I leave it to the judgment of mankind whether any thing be more unreaſonable than to tell men in effect, that it is fit they ſhould underſtand as little of Religion as is poſſible; that God hath publiſhed a very dangerous Book, with which it is not ſafe for the people to be familiarly acquainted; that our bleſſed *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* and the ancient *Chriſtian* Church for more than ſix hundred years were not wiſe managers of Religion, nor prudent diſpenſers of the Scriptures; but like fond and fooliſh Fathers put a knife and a ſword into the hands of their Children, with which they might eaſily have foreſeen what miſchief they would do to themſelves and others. And who would not chuſe to be of ſuch a Church which is provided of ſuch excellent and effectual means of Ignorance, ſuch wiſe and infallible methods for the prevention of knowledge in the people, and ſuch variety of cloſe ſhutters to keep out the light?

I have choſen to inſiſt upon this Argument, becauſe it is ſo very plain, that the moſt ordinary capacity may judge of this uſage and dealing with the ſouls of men; which is ſo very groſs that every man muſt needs be ſenſible of it; becauſe it toucheth men in the common rights of humane nature, which belong to them as much as the light of heaven, and the air we breathe in.

It requires no ſubtilty of wit, no skill in Antiquity, to underſtand theſe Controverſies between us and the Church of *Rome.* For there are no *Fathers* to be pretended on both ſides in theſe Queſtions: They yield we have Antiquity on ours: And we refer it to the common ſenſe of Mankind, which Church, that of *Rome* or *Ours*, hath all the right and reaſon in the world on her ſide in theſe debates? And, who they are that tyrannize over Chriſtians, the Governours of their Church or ours; who uſe the people like ſons and freemen, and who like ſlaves; who feed the Flock of Chriſt committed to them, and who take the Childrens bread from them? Who they are that when their Children ask bread, for bread give them a ſtone, and for an egg a ſerpent; I mean the *Legends* of their *Saints* inſtead of the Holy *Scriptures*, which are able to make men wiſe unto ſalvation: And who they are that lie moſt juſtly under the ſuſpicion of Errours and Corruptions, they who bring their Doctrine and Practices into the open light, and are willing to have them tryed by the true touchſtone, the *Word of God*; or they who ſhun the light, and decline all manner of tryal and examination? and who are moſt likely to carry on a worldy deſign, they who drive a trade of ſuch mighty gain and advantage under pretence of Religion, and make ſuch markets of the ignorance and ſins of the people; or we whom malice it ſelf cannot charge with ſerving any worldly deſign by any allowed Doctrine or Practice of our Religion? for we make no money of the miſtakes of the people, nor do we fill their heads with vain fears of new places of torment to make them willing to empty their purſes in a vainer hope of being delivered out of them. We do not like them pretend a mighty bank and treaſure of Merits in the Church, which they ſell to the people for ready money, giving them bills of Exchange from the *Pope* to *Purgatory*; when they who grant them have no reaſon to believe they will avail them, or be accepted in the other World.

For our parts we have no fear that our people ſhould underſtand Religion too well: We could wiſh, with *Moſes, that all the Lord's people were Prophets*: We ſhould be heartily glad the people would read the holy Scriptures more diligently, being ſufficiently aſſured that it is their own fault if they learn any thing but what is good from thence: We have no Doctrines or Practices contrary to Scripture, and conſequently no occaſion to keep it cloſe from the ſight of the people, or to hide any of the Commandments of God from them: We leave theſe mean arts to thoſe who ſtand in need of them.

In a word, there is nothing which God hath ſaid to men, which we deſire ſhould be concealed from them; Nay, we are willing the people ſhould examine what we teach, and bring all our Doctrines *to the Law and to the Teſtimony*; that if they be not according to *this Rule*, they may neither believe them nor us. 'Tis onely things falſe and adulterate which ſhun the light and fear the touchſtone, We have that ſecurity of the truth of our Religion and of the agreeableneſs of it to the word of God; that honeſt confidence of the goodneſs of our Cauſe, that we do not forbid the people to read the beſt Books our Adverſaries can write againſt it.

And now let any impartial man judge whether this be not a better argument of a good Cauſe, to leave men at liberty to try the grounds of their Religion, than the courſes which are taken in the Church of *Rome*, to awe men with an *Inquiſition*; and, as much as is poſſible, to keep the common people in Ignorance, not only of what their late Adverſaries, the *Proteſtants*, but their chief and ancient Adverſary, the *Scriptures*, have to ſay againſt them.

A man had need of more than common ſecurity of the skill and integrity of thoſe to whom he perfectly reſigns his underſtanding; this is too great a Truſt to be repoſed in humane frailty, and too ſtrong a temptation to others to impoſe upon us; to abuſe our blindneſs, and to make their own ends of our voluntary Ignorance and eaſie credulity. This is ſuch a folly as if a rich man ſhould make his Phyſician his heir; which is to tempt him either to deſtroy him or to let him die, for his own Intereſt. So he that truſts the care of his Soul with other men, and at the ſame time by *irrevocable Deed* ſettles his underſtanding upon them, lays too great a temptation before them to ſeduce and damn him for their own ends.

And now to reflect a little upon our ſelves. What cauſe have we to bleſs God who are ſo happily reſcued from that more than *Egyptian* darkneſs and bondage, wherein this Nation was detained for ſeveral Ages, who are delivered out of the hands of thoſe cruel task-maſters, who required brick without ſtraw; that men ſhould be religious without competent underſtanding, and work out their own ſalvation while they denied them the means of all others the moſt neceſſary to it; who are ſo uncharitable as to allow us no ſalvation out of their Church, and yet ſo unreaſonable as to deny us the very beſt means of ſalvation when we are in it.

Our Forefathers thought it a mighty privilege to have the Word of God reſtored to them, and the publick prayers and ſervice of God celebrated in a known Tongue. Let us uſe this ineſtimable privilege with great modeſty and humility; not to the nouriſhing of pride and ſelf-conceit, of diviſion and faction; but as the *Apoſtle* exhorts, *Let the word of God dwell richly in you, in all wiſdom; and let the peace of God rule in your hearts, unto which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

It concerns us mightily (with which admonition I ſhall conclude) both for the honour and ſupport of our Religion, to be at better union among our ſelves, and not to divide about leſſer things: and ſo to demean our ſelves, as to take from our Adverſaries all thoſe pretences whereby they would juſtifie themſelves, or at leaſt extenuate the guilt of that heavy charge, which falls every whit as juſtly upon them as ever it did upon the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, of *taking away the key of knowledge, and ſhutting the kingdom of heaven againſt men, neither going in themſelves, nor ſuffering thoſe that are entring to go in.*

SERMON XXXI.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

Preached before
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
Princeſs *ANN* of *DENMARK*
AT
TUNBRIDGE-WELLS *September* 2d 1688.

MATTH. XXV. 1, 2, &c.

Then ſhall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

And five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh, &c.

MY deſign at preſent is to explain this *Parable*, and to make ſuch *Obſervations* upon it as ſeem moſt naturally and without ſqueezing the *Parable* to ſpring from it: And then to make ſome *Application* of it to our ſelves.

Then ſhall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins; By the *Kingdom of Heaven* is meant the ſtate and condition of things under the *Goſpel*; By the *ten Virgins*, thoſe who embraced the Profeſſion of it, which is here repreſented by their *taking their Lamps and going forth to meet the Bridegroom:* in alluſion to the ancient Cuſtom of *Marriages*, in which the *Bridegroom* was wont to lead home his *Bride* in the Night by the light of *Lamps* or *Torches*.

But this Profeſſion was not in all equally firm and fruitful; and therefore thoſe who perſever'd and continued ſtedfaſt in this Profeſſion, notwithſtanding all the temptations and allurements of the World, and all the fierce ſtorms and aſſaults of Perſecution to which this Profeſſion was expoſed; and being thus firmly rooted in it, did bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit and abound in the Graces and Virtues of a good life, Theſe are the *wiſe Virgins:* But thoſe who either deſerted this Profeſſion, or did not bring forth fruits anſwerable to it, are the *fooliſh Virgins*.

And that this is the true difference between them will appear, if we conſider how the *Parable* repreſents them, *verſ.* 3, 4. *They that were fooliſh took their Lamps, and took no Oyl with them: But the wiſe took Oyl in their Veſſels with their Lamps.* So that they both took their *Lamps*, and both lighted them, and therefore muſt both be ſuppos'd to have ſome *Oyl* in their *Lamps* at firſt, as appears from *verſe* 8. where *the fooliſh Virgins ſaid unto the wiſe, give us of your oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.* They had it ſeems ſome Oyl in their Lamps at firſt, which kept them lighted for a little while, but had taken no care for a future ſupply. And therefore the difference between the *wiſe* and *fooliſh* Virgins did not, as ſome have imagin'd, conſiſt in this, that the *wiſe* Virgins had Oyl, but the *fooliſh* had none; but in this, that the *fooliſh* had taken no care for a further ſupply, after the Oyl which was at firſt put into their Lamps was ſpent; as the *wiſe* had done, who beſides the Oyl that was in their Lamps carried likewiſe a *Reſerve* in ſome other *Veſſel*, for a continual ſupply of the *Lamp*, as there ſhould be occaſion; *the wiſe took Oyl in their Veſſels with their Lamps.*

Now the meaning of all this is, That they who are repreſented by the *wiſe Virgins* had not only embraced the Profeſſion of the *Chriſtian* Religion, as the *fooliſh Virgins* alſo had done, for they both had their Lamps lighted; but they likewiſe perſever'd in that Profeſſion, and brought forth fruits anſwerable to it. For by *Oyl* in their *Lamps* and the firſt lighting of them, which was common to them both, is meant that ſolemn Profeſſion of *Faith* and *Repentance* which all *Chriſtians* make in *Baptiſm*: By that farther *ſupply of Oyl*, which the *wiſe Virgins* only took care to provide, is ſignified our conſtancy and perſeverance in this Profeſſion, together with the fruits of the Spirit, and the improvement of the *Grace* received in *Baptiſm* by the practice and exerciſe of all the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good life whereby men are fitted and prepar'd for *Death* and *Judgment*, which are here repreſented to us by the *coming of the Bridegroom*.

This being plainly the main ſcope and intention of the *Parable*, I ſhall explain the reſt of it, as there ſhall be occaſion, under the ſeveral *Obſervations* which I ſhall raiſe from the ſeveral parts of it. And they ſhall be theſe.

Firſt, I obſerve the charitable *Decorum* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this as well as in the reſt of his *Parables*; as if He would fain ſuppoſe and hope, that among thoſe who enjoy the *Goſpel* and make profeſſion of it, the number of them that are truly good is equal to thoſe that are bad. For our *B. Saviour* here repreſents the whole number of the *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity* by *ten Virgins*, the half whereof the *Parable* ſeems to ſuppoſe to be truly and really good, and to perſevere in goodneſs to the end, *verſ.* 1, 2. *Then ſhall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh.*

Secondly, I obſerve how very common it is for men to neglect this great concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a due preparation for another World; and how willing men are to deceive themſelves herein, and to depend upon any thing elſe, how groundleſs and unreaſonable ſoever, rather than to take pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner repreſented to us in the deſcription of the *fooliſh Virgins*, who had provided no *ſupply* of *Oyl* in their *Veſſels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was coming would have furniſh'd themſelves by *borrowing* or *buying* of others, *verſ.* 8, 9, 10.

Thirdly, I obſerve, That even the better ſort of Chriſtians are not careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themſelves for Death and Judgment:

Whilſt the Bridegroom tarried, they all ſlumbered and ſlept; even the *wiſe* Virgins as well as the fooliſh.

Fourthly, I obſerve further, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpoſe, in this great work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the laſt. Thus the *fooliſh Virgins* did, and what a ſad confuſion and hurry they were in we may ſee *verſ.*6,7,8,9. *And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him. At midnight*; the moſt diſmal and unſeaſonable time of all other: *Then all thoſe Virgins aroſe, and trimmed their Lamps: and the fooliſh ſaid unto the wiſe, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out: But the wiſe anſwered, not ſo; leſt there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that ſell, and buy for your ſelves.* And how ineffectual all that they could do at that time prov'd to be, we find, *verſ.* 10, 11, 12; *And whilſt they went to buy the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was ſhut. Afterwards came alſo the other Virgins, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us: But he anſwered and ſaid, verily I ſay unto you, I know you not.*

Fifthly, I obſerve that there is no ſuch thing as *Works* of *Super-erogation*; That no man can do more than needs, and is his duty to do, by way of preparation for another World. For when the *fooliſh Virgins* would have begg'd of the *wiſe* ſome *Oyl for their Lamps, the wiſe anſwered, not ſo, leſt there be not enough for us and you.* It was only the *fooliſh Virgins* that had entertain'd this fooliſh conceit, that there might be an *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Merit* in others ſufficient to ſupply their want: But the *wiſe* knew not of any that they had to ſpare, but ſuppos'd all that they had little enough to qualifie them for the reward of eternal life; *Not ſo*, ſay they, μήποτε, *leſt at any time*, leſt when there ſhould be need and occaſion, all that we have done, or could do, ſhould prove little enough for our ſelves.

Sixthly and *laſtly*, I obſerve, That if we could ſuppoſe any perſons to be ſo over-good, as to have more grace and goodneſs than needs to qualifie them for the reward of eternal life, yet there is no *aſſigning* and *transferring* of this *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Virtue* from one man to another. For we ſee, *verſ.* 9, 10. that all the ways which they could think of, of *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl* of others, did all prove ineffectual; becauſe the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one Sinner ſhould be in a condition to merit for another.

All theſe *Obſervations* ſeem to have ſome fair and probable foundation in ſome part or other of this *Parable*; and moſt of them, I am ſure, are agreeable to the main ſcope and intention of the whole. I ſhall ſpeak to them ſeverally, and as briefly as I can.

I. *Firſt*, I obſerve the charitable *Decorum* which our *B. Saviour* keeps in this, as well as in the reſt of his *Parables*; as if he would fain ſuppoſe and hope, that among thoſe who enjoy the *Goſpel* and make *Profeſſion* of it, the number of thoſe who make a firm and ſincere Profeſſion of it, and perſevere in goodneſs to the end, is equal to the number of thoſe who do not make good their Profeſſion, or who fall off from it.

I ſhall not be long upon this, becauſe I lay the leaſt ſtreſs upon it, of all the reſt. I ſhall only take notice, that our *B. Saviour* in this *Parable* repreſents the whole number of the *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity* by *ten Virgins*, the half of which the *Parable* ſeems to ſuppoſe to have ſincerely embraced the *Chriſtian Profeſſion*, and to have perſever'd therein to the laſt; *The Kingdom of Heaven ſhall be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom: And five of them were wiſe, and five were fooliſh.*

And this *Decorum* our *B. Saviour* ſeems carefully to obſerve in his other *Parables:* As in the *Parable* of the *Prodigal,Luke* 15. where for ***one*** Son that left his Father, and took riotous courſes, there was ***another*** that ſtayed always with him and continued conſtant to his duty. And in the *Parable* of the *ten Talents*, which immediately follows that of the *ten Virgins*, ***two*** are ſuppoſed to improve the Talents committed to them, for ***one*** that made no improvement of his. He that had *five Talents* committed to him made them *five more*, and he that had *two* gained *other two*; and only he that had but *one Talent*, *hid it in the earth*, and made no improvement of it. And in the *Parable* which I am now upon, the number of the *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity*, who took care to fit and prepare themſelves for the *coming of the Bridegroom*, is ſuppoſed equal to the number of thoſe who did not.

And whether this be particularly intended in the *Parable* or not, it may however be thus far inſtructive to us; That we ſhould be ſo far from leſſening the number of *true Chriſtians*, and from confining the *Church* of *Chriſt* within a narrow compaſs, ſo as to exclude out of its *Communion* the far greateſt part of the *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity*; that on the contrary, we ſhould enlarge the *Kingdom* of *Chriſt* as much as we can, and extend our charity to all *Churches* and *Chriſtians*, of what *Denomination* ſoever, as far as regard to Truth and to the foundations of the *Chriſtian* Religion will permit us to believe and hope well of them; and rather be contented to err a little on the favourable and charitable part than to be miſtaken on the cenſorious and damning ſide.

And for this reaſon perhaps it is, that our *B. Saviour* thought fit to frame his *Parables* with ſo remarkable a *Byaſs* to the charitable ſide: Partly to inſtruct us, to extend our charity towards all *Chriſtian* Churches, and *Profeſſors* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, and our good hopes concerning them, as far as with reaſon we can: An partly to reprove the uncharitableneſs of the *Jews*, who poſitively excluded all the reſt of Mankind, beſides themſelves, from all hopes of Salvation. And odious temper, which to the infinite Scandal of the *Chriſtian* Name and Profeſſion, hath prevail'd upon ſome *Chriſtians* to that notorious degree, as not only to ſhut out all the *Reform'd* Part of the *Weſtern* Church, almoſt equal in number to themſelves, from all hopes of Salvation under the notion of *Hereticks*; but likewiſe to un-church all the other Churches of the *Chriſtian* World, which are of much greater extent and number than themſelves, that do not own ſubjection to the *Biſhop* of *Rome:* And this they do, by declaring it to be *of neceſſity to Salvation for every Creature to be ſubject to the Roman Biſhop.* And this *Supremacy* of the *Biſhop* of *Rome* over all *Chriſtian* Churches *Bellarmin* calls *the Sum of the Chriſtian Religion.* So that the *Roman* Communion is plainly founded in *Schiſm*, that is, in the moſt unchriſtian and uncharitable *Principle* that can be, namely, *that they are the only true Church of Chriſt, out of which none can be ſaved:* which was the very *Schiſm* of the *Donatiſts.* And in this they are ſo poſitive, that the learned men of that Church, in their Diſputes and Writings, are much more inclinable to believe the Salvation of *Heathens* to be poſſible, than of any of thoſe Chriſtians whom they are pleas'd to call *Hereticks.* The *Faith* of the Church of *Rome* is certainly none of the beſt; but of one of the greateſt and moſt eſſential Vertues of the *Chriſtian Religion*, I mean *Charity*, I doubt they have the leaſt ſhare of any *Chriſtian* Church this day in the World.

Secondly, I obſerve, not from any particular *circumſtance*, but from the main *Scope* and deſign of this *Parable*, How very apt a great part of *Chriſtians* are to neglect this great concernment of their Souls, *viz.* a careful and due preparation for another World; and how willing they are to deceive themſelves in this matter, and to depend upon any thing elſe, how groundleſs and unreaſonable ſoever, rather than to take the pains to be really good and fit for Heaven. And this is in a very lively manner repreſented to us in the deſcription of the *fooliſh Virgins*, who had provided no *ſupply* of *Oyl* in their *Veſſels*, and when the *Bridegroom* was *coming* would have furniſh'd themſelves by *borrowing* or *buying* of others, *verſ.* 8, 9, 10. They contented themſelves with having their *Lamps* lighted at their firſt ſetting out to meet the *Bridegroom*, that is, with their being admitted into the *Profeſſion* of *Chriſtianity* by *Baptiſm*, but either were not ſtedfaſt in this *Profeſſion*, or were not careful to adorn it with the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good life. II.

And the true Reaſon why men are ſo very apt to deceive themſelves in this matter, and are ſo hardly brought to thoſe things wherein Religion mainly conſiſts, I mean the fruits of the Spirit and the practice of real Goodneſs; I ſay, the true reaſon of this is, becauſe they are extremely deſirous to reconcile, if it were poſſible, the hopes of eternal happineſs in another World with a liberty to live as they liſt in this preſent World: They are loth to be at the trouble and drudgery of mortifying their luſts, and governing their paſſions, and bridling their tongues, and practiſing all thoſe duties which are comprehended in thoſe *two great Commandments* of the *Love of God* and of our *Neighbour*: They would fain gain the favour of God, and make their calling and election ſure, by ſome eaſier way than by *giving all diligence* to add to their *Faith* and *Knowledge* the *Graces* and *Virtues* of a good life.

For the plain truth of the matter is, men had rather that Religion ſhould be any thing than what indeed it is, *viz.* the thwarting and croſſing of their vicious inclinations, the curing of their evil and corrupt affections, the due care and government of their unruly appetites and paſſions, the ſincere endeavour and the conſtant practice of all holineſs and virtue in their lives: And therefore they had much rather have ſomething that might handſomely palliate and excuſe their evil inclinations and practices, than to be obliged to retrench and renounce them; and rather than amend and reform their wicked lives, they would be contented to make an *honourable amends* and compenſation to Almighty God in ſome other way.

This hath been the way and folly of Mankind in all ages, to defeat the great end and deſign of Religion, and to thruſt it by, by ſubſtituting ſomething elſe in the place of it which, as they think, may ſerve the turn as well, having the appearance of as much devotion and reſpect towards God, and really coſting them more money and pains, than that which God requires of them. Men have ever been apt thus to impoſe upon themſelves, and to pleaſe themſelves with a conceit of pleaſing God full as well, or better, by ſome other way than that which he hath preſcribed and appointed for them.

By this means, and upon this *falſe Principle*, Religion hath ever been apt to degenerate both among *Jews* and *Chriſtians*, into external and little obſervances, and into a great zeal for leſſer things with a total neglect of the greater and weightier matters of Religion; and, in a word, into infinite *Superſtitions* of one kind or other, and an arrogant conceit of the extraordinary

traordinary righteouſneſs and merit of theſe things: In which ſome have proceeded to that height, as if they could drive a ſtrict bargain with God for eternal life and happineſs; and have treated Him in ſo inſolent a manner, by their Doctrine of the *Merit* of their *Devotions* and *good Works*, as if God were as much beholden to them for their ſervice and obedience, as they are to Him for the reward of them; which they are not afraid to ſay they may challenge at God's hands as of right and juſtice belonging to them.

Nay, ſo far have they carried this *Doctrine* in the Church of *Rome*, as not only to pretend to merit eternal life for themſelves, but likewiſe to do a great deal more for the benefit and advantage of others who have not righteouſneſs and goodneſs enough of their own: Which was the ſilly conceit of the *fooliſh Virgins* here in the *Parable*, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more fully by and by.

And it is no great wonder that ſuch eaſie ways of Religion and pleaſing God are very grateful to the corrupt Nature of Man, and that men who are reſolv'd to continue in an evil courſe are glad to be of a Church which will aſſure Salvation to men upon ſuch terms: The great difficulty is, for men to believe that things which are ſo apparently abſurd and unreaſonable can be true; and to perſwade themſelves that they can impoſe upon God by ſuch pretences of ſervice and obedience, as no wiſe *Prince* or *Father* upon earth is to be deluded withal by his *Subjects* or *Children*. We ought to have worthier thoughts of God, and to conſider that He is a *great King*, and will be obey'd and obſerv'd by his Creatures *in his own way*, and make them happy upon his own terms: and that obedience to what he commands is better and more acceptable to him than any other Sacrifice that we can offer, which he hath not required at our hands: and likewiſe, that he is infinitely wiſe and good; and therefore that the *Laws*, which he hath given us to live by, are much more likely and certain means of our happineſs, than any *inventions* and *devices* of our own.

III. *Thirdly*, I obſerve that even the better and more conſiderate ſort of *Chriſtians* are not ſo careful and watchful as they ought to prepare themſelves for *Death* and *Judgment*; *whilſt the Bridegroom tarried, they all ſlumbered and ſlept.* Even the *Diſciples* of our *Saviour*, whilſt he was yet perſonally preſent with them, and after a particular charge given them from his own mouth, *Watch and pray leſt ye enter into temptation*; yet did not keep that guard upon themſelves as to *watch with him for one hour*. *In many things*, ſays St. *James*, *we offend all*; even the beſt of us: And who is there that doth not, ſome time or other, remit of his vigilancy and care, ſo as to give the Devil an advantage and to lye open to temptation, for want of a continual guard upon himſelf? But then the difference between the *wiſe* and *fooliſh Virgins* was this, that though they both *ſlept*, yet the *wiſe* did not let their *Lamps* go out; they neither quitted their *Profeſſion*, nor did they extinguiſh it by a bad life: and though when the *Bridegroom* came ſuddenly upon them, they were not ſo actually prepar'd to meet him by a continual vigilancy, yet they were habitually prepar'd by the good diſpoſition of their minds and the general courſe of a holy life: Their *Lamps* might *burn dim* for want of continual trimming, but they had *Oyl* in their *Veſſels* to *ſupply* their *Lamps*, which the *fooliſh Virgins* had taken no care to provide. But ſurely the greateſt wiſdom of all is to maintain a continual watchfulneſs, that ſo we may not be ſurpriz'd by the *coming of the Bridegroom*, and be in a confuſion when *Death* or *Judgment* ſhall overtake us. And *bleſſed are thoſe Servants*, and *wiſe* indeed, whoſe *Lamps* always *burn* *bright*, and whom the *Bridegroom* when *he comes ſhall find watching*, and in a fit poſture and preparation to meet Him.

Fourthly, I obſerve likewiſe, how little is to be done by us, to any good purpoſe, in this great work of *Preparation*, when it is deferr'd and put off to the laſt. And thus the *fooliſh Virgins* did, but what a ſad confuſion and hurry they were in at the ſudden coming of the *Bridegroom*, when they were not only *aſleep*, but when after they were awaken'd they found themſelves altogether unprovided of that which was neceſſary to trim their *Lamps*, and to put them in a poſture to meet the *Bridegroom*: When they wanted that which was neceſſary at that very inſtant, but could not be provided in an inſtant: I ſay, what a tumult and confuſion they were in, being thus ſurpriz'd, the *Parable* repreſents to us at large, *verſ.* 6, 7, 8, 9. *and at midnight there was a cry made, Behold! the Bridegroom* cometh, *go ye out to meet him. Then all thoſe Virgins aroſe and trimmed their Lamps*, that is, they went about it as well as they could; and the *fooliſh ſaid unto the wiſe*, *give us of your Oyl, for our Lamps are gone out.* IV.

At midnight there was a cry made, that is, at the moſt diſmal and unſeaſonable time of all other; when they were faſt aſleep, and ſuddenly awaken'd in great terror, when they could not on the ſudden recollect themſelves, and conſider what to do; when the ſummons was ſo very ſhort, that they had neither time to conſider what was fit to be done, nor time to do it in.

And ſuch is the Caſe of thoſe who put off their *Repentance* and *Preparation* for another World, till they are ſurpriz'd by *Death* or *Judgment*; for it comes all to one in the iſſue, which of them it be. The *Parable* indeed ſeems more particularly to point at our *Lord's coming to Judgment*, but the caſe is much the ſame as to thoſe who are ſurpriz'd by *ſudden Death*; ſuch as gives them but little, or not ſufficient time for ſo great a work: becauſe ſuch as *Death* leaves them, *Judgment* will certainly find them.

And what a miſerable confuſion muſt they needs be in, who are thus ſurpriz'd either by the one or the other? How unfit ſhould we be, if the *general Judgment* of the World ſhould come upon us on the ſudden, to meet that *great Judge* at his *coming*, if we have made no preparation for it before that time? What ſhall we then be able to do, in that great and univerſal conſternation, when the *Son of man ſhall appear in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory*; when the *Sun ſhall be darken'd, and the Moon turned into blood, and all the powers of Heaven ſhall be ſhaken*: when *all Nature* ſhall feel ſuch violent pangs and convulſions, and the whole World ſhall be in a combuſtion flaming and cracking about our ears: When *the Heavens ſhall be ſhrivel'd up as a Scroll when it is roll'd together*, and the *Earth* ſhall be toſs'd from its Center, *and every Mountain and Iſland ſhall be removed?* What thoughts can the wiſeſt men then have about them, in the midſt of ſo much noiſe and terror? Or if they could have any, what time will there then be to put them in execution? when they ſhall ſee the *Angel, that ſtandeth upon the Sea and upon the Earth, lifting up his hand to Heaven, and ſwearing by Him that liveth for ever and ever that Time ſhall be no longer*; as this dreadful Day is deſcribed *Rev.* 10. 5, 6. and *chap.* 6. 15. where Sinners are repreſented at the *Appearance* of this *Great Judge*, not as flying to God in hopes of mercy, but as flying from Him in utter deſpair of finding mercy with Him: *The Kings of the Earth, and the Great Men, and the Mighty Men, and the Rich Men, and the Great Captains hid themſelves in the Dens and in the Rocks of the Earth; and ſaid to the Mountains and Rocks,* *fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that ſitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the Great Day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand?* The biggeſt and the boldeſt Sinners that ever were upon Earth, ſhall then flee from the face of Him whom they have ſo often blaſphemed and denied; and ſhall ſo far deſpair of finding mercy with Him in that Day, who would ſue to Him for it no ſooner, that they ſhall addreſs themſelves to the *Mountains* and *Rocks*, as being more pitiful and exorable than *He*; *to hide them from the face of Him that ſitteth on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: From the wrath of the Lamb*, to ſignifie to us that nothing is more terrible than *Meekneſs* and *Patience* when they are throughly provok'd and turn'd into *Fury*.

In ſuch dreadful confuſion ſhall all impenitent Sinners be, when they ſhall be ſurpriz'd by that *Great and terrible Day of the Lord:* And the *Caſe* of a *dying Sinner*, who would take no care in the time of his Life and Health to make preparation for another World, is not much more hopeful and comfortable.

For alas! how little is it that a ſick and dying man can do in ſuch a ſtrait of time? in the midſt of ſo much pain and weakneſs of Body, and of ſuch confuſion and amazement of Mind. With what heart can he ſet about ſo great a Work, for which there is ſo little time? With what face can he apply himſelf to God in this extremity, whom he hath ſo diſdainfully neglected all the days of his Life? And how can he have the confidence to hope, that God will hear his cries and regard his tears that are forc'd from him in this day of his neceſſity? when he is conſcious to himſelf that in that *long day* of God's *Grace* and *Patience* he turned a deaf ear to all his merciful invitations, and *rejected the counſel of God againſt himſelf.* In a word, how can he who *would not know, in that his Day, the things which belonged to his peace*, expect any other but that they ſhould now be for ever *hid from his eyes*, which are ready to be clos'd in utter darkneſs?

I will not pronounce any thing concerning the impoſſibility of a *Death-bed Repentance:* But I am ſure that it is very difficult, and I believe very rare. We have but one *Example*, that I know of, in the whole *Bible* of the Repentance of a dying Sinner; I mean that of the *penitent Thief* upon the *Croſs:* And the circumſtances of his Caſe are ſo peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot ſee that it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to men in ordinary Caſes. We are not like to ſuffer in the company of the *Son of God* and of the *Saviour of the World*; and if we could do ſo, it is not certain that we ſhould behave our ſelves towards Him ſo well as the *penitent Thief* did, and make ſo very good an end of ſo very bad a Life.

And the *Parable* in the *Text* is ſo far from giving any encouragement to a *Death-bed Repentance* and *Preparation*, that it rather repreſents their Caſe as deſperate who put off their *Preparation* to that Time. How ineffectual all that the *fooliſh Virgins* could do at that time did in the concluſion
v.8, 9, 10, prove, is ſet forth to us at large in the *Parable*; They wanted *Oyl*, but
11, 12. could neither *borrow* nor *buy* it: They would *then* fain have had it, and ran about to get it; but it was not to be obtain'd neither by entreaty, nor for money: Firſt they apply themſelves to the *wiſe Virgins*, for a ſhare in the
v. 8. *over-plus* of their *Graces* and *Virtues*; *the fooliſh ſaid unto the wiſe, give us of your Oyl for our Lamps are gone out; but the wiſe anſwered not ſo; leſt there be not enough for us and you:* The *wiſe Virgins*, it ſeems knew of none they had to ſpare: And then they are repreſented as *ironically* ſending the *fooliſh Virgins* to ſome *famous Market* where this *Oyl* was pretended to be *ſold*; *go*

ye rather to them that ſell and buy for your ſelves: And as dying and deſperate perſons are apt to catch at every twig, and when they can ſee no hopes of being ſaved, are apt to believe every one that will give them any; ſo theſe fooliſh Virgins follow the advice; *and whilſt they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was ſhut; and afterwards came alſo the other Virgins, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he anſwered and ſaid, verily I ſay unto you, I know you not.* V. 9. V. 10.

You ſee how *little*, or rather *no* encouragement at all there is from any the leaſt circumſtance in this *Parable*, for thoſe who have delay'd their *Preparation* for another World till they be overtaken by *Death* or *Judgment*, to hope by any thing that they can then do, by any importunity which they can then uſe, to gain admiſſion into Heaven. Let thoſe conſider this with fear and trembling, who forget God and neglect Religion all their Life-time, and yet feed themſelves with vain hopes by ſome *Device* or other to be admitted into Heaven at laſt.

V. *Fifthly*, I obſerve that there is no ſuch thing as *Works of Super-erogation*, that is, that no man can do more than needs, and than is his duty to do, by way of *Preparation* for another World. For when the *fooliſh Virgins* would have begg'd of the *wiſe* ſome *Oyl* for their *Lamps*, *the wiſe anſwered, not ſo*; *leſt there be not enough for us and you:* It was only the *fooliſh Virgins* that in the time of their extremity, and when they were conſcious that they wanted that which was abſolutely neceſſary to qualifie them for admiſſion into Heaven, who had entertain'd this *idle Conceit* that there might be an *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Merit* in others ſufficient to ſupply their want: But the *wiſe* knew not of any they had to ſpare, but ſuppoſed all that they had done, or could poſſibly do, to be little enough to qualifie them for the glorious Reward of eternal Life: *Not ſo*, ſay they, μήποτε *leſt at any time*, that is, leſt when there ſhould be need and occaſion, all that we have done, or could do, ſhould be little enough for our ſelves: And in this *Point* they had been plainly inſtructed by the *Bridegroom* himſelf, *But ye, when ye have done all, ſay we are unprofitable ſervants, and have done nothing but what was our duty to do.* V. 8. V. 9.

And yet this *Conceit* of the *fooliſh Virgins*, as abſurd as it is, hath been taken up in good earneſt by a *grave Matron*, who gives out her ſelf to be the *Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches*, and *the only infallible Oracle of Truth*, I mean the *Church* of *Rome*, whoſe avowed *Doctrine* it is, that there are ſome Perſons ſo excellently good that they may do more than needs for their own Salvation: And therefore when they have done as much for themſelves as in ſtrict duty they are bound to do, and thereby have paid down a full and valuable conſideration for Heaven, and as much as in equal juſtice between God and Man it is worth; that then they may go to work again for their *Friends*, and begin a new *Score*; and from that time forwards may put the *Surpluſage* of their *good Works* as a *Debt* upon God, to be laid up in the *Publick Treaſury* of the *Church*, as ſo many *Bills of Credit* which the *Pope* by his *Pardons* and *Indulgences* may diſpenſe, and place to whoſe account he pleaſes: And out of this *Bank*, which is kept at *Rome*, thoſe who never took care to have any Righteouſneſs of their own may be ſupplied at reaſonable rates.

To which they have added a further *ſupply* of *Grace*, if there ſhould be any need of it, by the *Sacrament* of *extreme Unction*, never heard of in the *Chriſtian Church* for many Ages; but deviſed, as it were on purpoſe, to furniſh ſuch *fooliſh Virgins* with *Oyl* as here deſcribed in the *Parable*.

And thus by one *Device* or other they have enervated the *Chriſtian Religion* to that degree, that it hath almoſt quite loſt its true virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men: And, inſtead of the real fruits of *Goodneſs* and *Righteouſneſs*, it produceth little elſe but *Superſtition* and *Folly*; or if it produce any *real Virtues*, yet even the virtue of thoſe *Virtues* is in a great meaſure ſpoil'd by their arrogant pretences of *Merit* and *Super-errogation*, and is render'd inſignificant to themſelves by their inſolent carriage and behaviour towards God.

VI. *Sixthly* and *laſtly*, If we could ſuppoſe any Perſons to be ſo over-grown with Goodneſs, as to have more than needs to qualifie them for the Reward of eternal Life; yet there can be no *aſſigning* and *transferring* of this *over-plus* of *Grace* and *Virtue* from one man to another. For we ſee that all the ways that could be thought on of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl* of others, did all prove ineffectual; becauſe the thing is in its own nature impracticable, that one Sinner who owes all that he hath, and much more to God, ſhould have any thing to ſpare wherewithal to *merit* for another.

Indeed our *B. Saviour* hath *merited* for us all the *Reward of eternal Life*, upon the *Conditions* of *Faith* and *Repentance* and *Obedience*: But the infinite *Merit* of his *Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be of no benefit and advantage to us, if we our ſelves be not really and inherently righteous. So St. *John* tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary *Conceit*, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as He is righteous.*

If we do ſincerely endeavour to pleaſe God and to keep his Commandments in the general courſe of a holy and virtuous Life, the *Merit* of *Chriſt's perfect Obedience* and *Sufferings* will be available with God for the acceptance of our *ſincere* though but *imperfect Obedience*. But if we take no care to be *righteous* and good our ſelves, the *perfect righteouſneſs* of *Chriſt* will do us no good; much leſs the *imperfect righteouſneſs* of any other man who is a Sinner himſelf. And the holieſt man that ever was upon Earth can no more *aſſign* and make over his *Righteouſneſs*, or *Repentance*, or any part of either, to another that wants it, than a man can *bequeath* his *Wiſdom*, or *Learning* to his *Heir*, or his *Friend*: No more than a *ſick man* can be reſtored to *Health* by virtue of the *Phyſick* which another man hath taken.

Let no man therefore think of being good by a *Deputy*, that cannot be contented to be happy and to be ſaved the ſame way, that is, to go to *Hell* and to be tormented there in *Perſon*, and to go to *Heaven* and be admitted into that *Place of Bliſs* only by *Proxy*. So that theſe *good Works* with a *hard name*, and the making over the *Merit* of them to others, have no manner of foundation either in *Scripture* or *Reaſon*, but are all mere *Fancy* and *Fiction* in *Divinity*.

The *Inference* from all this ſhall be the *application* which our *Saviour*
V. 13. makes of this *Parable*, *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh*; as if he had ſaid, the deſign of this *Parable* is to inſtruct us that we ought to be continually vigilant, and always upon our guard, and in a conſtant readineſs and preparation *to meet the Bridegroom*; becauſe we know not the time of his coming to *Judgment*, nor yet, which will be of the ſame conſequence and concernment to us, do

any of us know the preciſe time of our own *Death*. Either of theſe may happen at any time, and come when we leaſt expect them. And therefore we ſhould make the beſt and ſpeedieſt proviſion that we can for another World, and ſhould be continually upon our watch and trimming our Lamps, that we may not be ſurprized by either of theſe; neither by our own *particular Death*, nor by the *general Judgment* of the World: *Becauſe the Son of man will come in a Day when we look not for Him, and at an hour when we are not aware.*

More particularly, we ſhould take up a preſent and effectual reſolution not to delay our *Repentance* and the reformation of our Lives, that we may not have that great Work to do when we are not fit to do any thing; no not to diſpoſe of our *temporal* Concernments, much leſs to prepare for *Eternity*, and to do that in a few moments which ought to have been the care and endeavour of our whole Lives: That we may not be forced to huddle up an imperfect, and I fear an inſignificant *Repentance*; and to do that in great haſte and confuſion, which certainly does require our wiſeſt and moſt deliberate thoughts, and all the conſideration in the World.

And we ſhould provide ſtore of *Oyl* in our *Veſſels*, wherewith to *ſupply* our *Lamps* that they may *burn bright* to the laſt; I mean, we ſhould improve the *Grace* which we received in *Baptiſm*, by abounding in the fruits of the Spirit, and in all the ſubſtantial Virtues of a good Life; that ſo *an entrance may be miniſtred to us abundantly into the everlaſting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

By this means, when we are called *to meet the Bridegroom*, we ſhall not be put to thoſe miſerable and ſharking ſhifts which the *fooliſh Virgins* were driven to, of *begging*, or *borrowing*, or *buying Oyl*; which will all fail us, when we come to depend upon them: And though the Dying man may make a hard ſhift to ſupport himſelf with theſe falſe Comforts for a little while, yet when the ſhort Deluſion is over, which will be aſſoon as ever he is ſtepp'd into the other World, he will to his everlaſting confuſion and trouble find the door of Heaven ſhut againſt him, and that notwithſtanding all his *vaſt Treaſure* of *Pardons* and *Indulgences*, which have coſt him ſo much, and are worth ſo little, he *ſhall never ſee the Kingdom of God.*

And *laſtly*, we ſhould take great care that we do not extinguiſh our *Lamps* by *quitting* the *Profeſſion* of our *Holy Religion* upon any temptation of advantage, or for fear of any loſs or ſuffering whatſoever. This *Occaſion* will call for all our *Faith* and *Patience*, all our *Courage* and *Conſtancy*,

Nunc animis opus, Ænea, nunc pectore firmo.

When it comes to this *Trial*, we had need to *gird up the loins of our minds*, to ſummon all our forces, and to *put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand faſt in an evil day, and when we have done all to ſtand.*

And now, *my Brethren*, to uſe the words of St. *Peter*, *I teſtifie unto you, that this is the true Grace of God wherein ye ſtand.* 1 Pet. 5. 12 *The Proteſtant Reformed* Religion, which we in this Nation profeſs, is the *very Goſpel of Chriſt*, the *true ancient Chriſtianity.*

And, for God's ſake, ſince in this *hour of Temptation*, when our Religion is in ſo apparent hazard, we pretend to love it to that degree as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us reſolve to practiſe it; and to teſtifie our love to it in the ſame way that our *Saviour* would have us ſhew our love to Him, by *keeping his Commandments.*

I will conclude all with the *Apoſtle's* Exhortation, ſo very proper for this purpoſe, and to this preſent Time, *Only let your converſation be as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt*, that is, chiefly and above all take care to lead lives ſuitable to the *Chriſtian* Religion: And then, as it follows, *ſtand faſt in one Spirit, with one Mind, ſtriving together for the Faith of the Goſpel: And in nothing terrified by your Adverſaries, which to them is an evident token of perdition, but to you of Salvation, and that of God.* Philip. 1. 27.

Now unto him that is able to ſtabliſh you in the Goſpel, and to keep you from falling; and to preſent you faultleſs before the preſence of his Glory with exceeding joy: To the only wiſe God our Saviour, be Glory and Majeſty, Dominion and Power, both *now and ever.* Amen.

A
Thankſgiving-Sermon
FOR OUR
DELIVERANCE
BY THE
Prince of Orange.

Preached at LINCOLNS-INN Chappel,
January 31. 1688.

To the Worſhipful the Maſters of the Bench, and the reſt of the Gentlemen of the Honourable Society of *Lincolns-Inn.*

Though I was at firſt very unwilling to Expoſe to the Publick a Sermon *made upon ſo little Warning, and ſo great an* Occaſion; *yet upon ſecond thoughts I could not think it fit to reſiſt the Unanimous and Earneſt Requeſt of ſo many Worthy Perſons, as the* Maſters *of the* Bench *of this* Honourable Society; *to whom I ſtand ſo much indebted for your great and continued reſpects to me, and kind acceptance of my Labours among you for now above the ſpace of Five and Twenty Years. In a moſt grateful acknowledgment whereof, this* Diſcourſe, *ſuch as it is, in mere Obedience to your Commands, is now humbly preſented to you, by*

Your moſt Obliged and

Feb. 28.
168$\frac{8}{9}$.

Faithful Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

SERMON

SERMON XXXII.

EZRA IX. 13, 14.

And after all that is come upou us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs; ſeeing that thou our God haſt puniſhed us leſs than our Iniquities deſerve, and haſt given us ſuch a deliverance as this:

Should we again break thy Commandments, and join in affinity with the people of theſe Abominations; wouldſt not thou be angry with us till thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?

I Am ſufficiently aware that the particular occaſion of theſe *Words* is, in ſeveral reſpects very different from the Occaſion of this Day's Solemnity. For theſe Words were ſpoken by *Ezra* at a time appointed for Publick and Solemn Humiliation. But I ſhall not now conſider them in that relation, but rather as they refer to that Great *Deliverance* which God had ſo lately wrought for them; and as they are a Caution to take heed of abuſing great mercies received from God; and ſo they are very proper and pertinent to the great Occaſion of this Day. Nay theſe words, even in the ſaddeſt aſpect, are not ſo unſuitable to it. For we find in *Scripture* upon the moſt ſolemn Occaſions of Humiliation, that good Men have always teſtified a thankful ſenſe of the goodneſs of God to them. And indeed, the Mercy of God doth then appear above meaſure merciful, when the Sinner is moſt deeply ſenſible of his own Vileneſs and Unworthineſs. And ſo *Ezra* here, in the depth of their Sorrow and Humiliation, hath ſo great a ſenſe of the greatneſs of their Deliverance, that he hardly knew how to expreſs it; *And haſt given us ſuch a Deliverance as this.* And on the other hand, we find that good Men, in their moſt ſolemn Praiſes and Thankſgivings, have made very ſerious reflections upon their own unworthineſs. And ſurely the beſt way to make Men truly thankful is firſt to make them very humble. When *David* makes his moſt ſolemn acknowledgments to God for his great Mercies to him; how doth he abaſe himſelf before Him: *But who am I, and what is my people?* 1 Chron. 29. 4. And ſo likewiſe, after he had ſummoned all the powers and faculties of his Soul to joyn in the Praiſes of God, he interpoſeth this ſeaſonable meditation, *He hath not dealt with as after our ſins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Pſal. 103. 10. The greater and more lively ſenſe we have of the goodneſs of God to us, the more we ſhall abhor our ſelves in duſt and aſhes; nothing being more apt to melt us into Tears of Repentance, than the conſideration of great and undeſerved Mercies vouchſafed to us. *The goodneſs of God* doth naturally *lead to repentance.*

Having thus reconciled the *Text* to the preſent *Occaſion*, I ſhall for the more diſtinct handling of the *Words* take notice of theſe two Parts in them.

Firſt, Here is a Caſe ſuppoſed; ſhould we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds*, and *ſince God hath puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and hath given us ſuch a deliverance as this; ſhould we again break his Commandments.*

Secondly, Here is a ſentence and determination in the Caſe; *Wouldſt thou not be angry with us till thou hadſt conſum'd us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* This is not ſpoken doubtfully, though it be put by way of queſtion; but is the more vehemently poſitive, the more peremptorily affirmative; as if he had ſaid, it cannot otherwiſe be in reaſon expected, but that after ſuch repeated provocations *God ſhould be angry with us till he had conſumed us.*

I. *Firſt*, Here is a Caſe ſuppoſed; ſhould we, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs; and ſince God hath puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities deſerve, and hath given us ſuch a deliverance as this: Should we again break his commandments, and join in affinity with the People of theſe abominations.* In which *Words* theſe following *Propoſitions* ſeem to be involv'd, which I ſhall but juſt mention, and paſs to the *Second* Part of the *Text.*

1. That Sin is the cauſe of all our ſufferings, *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs. Our evil deeds* bring all other evils upon us.

2. That great Sins have uſually a proportionable puniſhment; *after all that is come upon us*, there is the greatneſs of our *puniſhment; for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs*, there is the greatneſs of our *Sin.* But when I ſay that great Sins have a proportionable Puniſhment, I do not mean that any temporal Puniſhments are proportionable to the great evil of Sin; but that God doth uſually obſerve a proportion in the temporal puniſhments of Sin, ſo that although no temporal puniſhment be proportionable to Sin, yet the temporal puniſhment of one Sin holds a proportion to the puniſhment of another; and conſequently, leſſer and greater Sins have proportionably a leſſer and greater Puniſhment.

3. That all the Puniſhments which God inflicts in this Life do fall ſhort of the demerit of our Sins; *and ſeeing thou our God haſt puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities deſerve.* In the *Hebrew* it is, *and haſt kept down our iniquities*, that is, that they ſhould not riſe up againſt us. The LXX. expreſſeth it very emphatically, *thou haſt eaſed us of our ſins*, that is, thou haſt not let the whole weight of them fall upon us. Were it not for the reſtraints which God puts upon his anger, and the merciful mitigations of it, the Sinner would not be able to bear it, but muſt ſink under it. Indeed it is only ſaid in the *Text*, that the puniſhment which God inflicted upon the *Jews*, though it was a long Captivity, was beneath the deſert of their Sins: But yet it is univerſally true, and *Ezra* perhaps might intend to inſinuate ſo much, that all temporal Puniſhments, though never ſo ſevere, are always leſs than our iniquities deſerve.

4. That God many times works very great Deliverances for thoſe who are very unworthy of them; *and haſt given us ſuch a deliverance as this,*

notwithſtanding *our evil deeds*, and notwithſtanding *our great Treſpaſs.*

5. That we are but too apt, even after great Judgments, and after great Mercies, to relapſe into our former Sins; *ſhould we again break thy Commandments.* *Ezra* inſinuates that there was great reaſon to fear this, eſpecially conſidering the ſtrange temper of that People, who when God multiply'd his bleſſings upon them, were ſo apt to *wax fat and kick againſt Him*; and though he had caſt them ſeveral times into the furnace of Affliction, though they were melted for the preſent, yet they were many times but the harder for it afterwards.

6. That it is good to take notice of thoſe particular Sins which have brought the Judgments of God upon us. So *Ezra* does here; *after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs*; and, *ſhould we again join in affinity with the People of theſe abominations.*

II. *Secondly*, Here is a Sentence and Determination in the Caſe; *wouldſt thou not be angry with us till thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* Which Queſtion, as I ſaid before, doth imply a ſtrong and peremptory affirmative; as if he had ſaid, after ſuch a provocation there is great reaſon to conclude that God would be angry with us till he had conſumed us.

From whence the *Obſervation* contained in this part of the *Text* will be this, *That it is a fearful aggravation of Sin, and a ſad preſage of ruin to a People, after great Judgments and great Deliverances, to return to Sin, and eſpecially to the ſame Sins again.* Hear how paſſionately *Ezra* expreſſes himſelf in this Caſe, *verſe* 6. *I am aſhamed, O my God, and bluſh to lift up mine eyes to thee, my God.* Why? what was the cauſe of this great ſhame and confuſion of face? He tells us, *verſe* 9. *for we were bondmen, yet our God hath not forſaken us in our bondage, but hath extended his mercy to us, to give us a reviving, to ſet up the Houſe of our God, and to repair the deſolations thereof, and to give us a Wall in* Judah *and in* Jeruſalem; that is, to reſtore to them the free and ſafe exerciſe of their Religion. Here was great Mercy, and a mighty Deliverance indeed; and yet after this they preſently relapſed into a very great ſin, *verſe* 10. *And now, O our God, what ſhall we ſay after this? for we have forſaken thy Commandments.*

In the handling of this *Obſervation*, I ſhall do theſe *two* things.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that this is a very heavy aggravation of Sin, and

Secondly, That it is a fatal preſage of ruin to a People.

Firſt, It is a heavy aggravation of Sin after great Judgments, and after ſignal Mercies and Deliverances to return to Sin, and eſpecially to the ſame Sins again. Here are *three* things to be diſtinctly ſpoken to.

1. That it is a great aggravation of Sin to return to it after great Judgments.
2. To do this after great Mercies and Deliverances.
3. After both to return to the ſame Sins again.

1. It is a great aggravation of Sin after great Judgments have been upon us to return to an evil courſe. Becauſe this is an Argument of great obſtinacy in evil. The longer *Pharaoh* reſiſted the Judgments of God, the more

was his wicked heart hardned, till at laſt he arriv'd at a monſtrous degree
of hardneſs; having been, as the *Text* tells us, hardned under *ten plagues.*
And we find, that after God had threaten'd the People of *Iſrael* with ſeveral
Lev.26.13 Judgments, he tells them, that if they *will not be reformed by all theſe things,*
he will puniſh them ſeven times more for their ſins. And if the juſt God will
in ſuch a caſe puniſh ſeven times more, we may conclude that the Sin is Seven
times greater.

What ſad Complaints doth the *Prophet* make of the People of *Iſrael* growing
Iſai.1.4. worſe for Judgments. *Ah! ſinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity,*
children that have been corrupters, a ſeed of evil doers. He can hardly find
words enough to expreſs how great Sinners they were; and he adds the reaſon
Verſe 5. in the next *verſe, Why ſhould they be ſmitten any more? they will revolt*
more and more. They were but the worſe for Judgments. This renders
Iſai.9.13. them *a ſinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity.* And again, *The People*
turneth not to him that ſmiteth them, neither do they ſeek the Lord of Hoſts;
therefore his anger is not turned away, but his hand is ſtretched out ſtill. And
Iſai.26.11. the ſame *Prophet* further complains to the ſame purpoſe, *When thy hand is*
lifted up they will not ſee. There is a particular brand ſet upon King *Ahaz,*
2 Chron. becauſe affliction made him worſe: *This is that King* Ahaz, that is, *that* grievous
28.22. and notorious Sinner: And what was it that render'd him ſo? *In the*
time of his diſtreſs he ſinned yet more againſt the Lord; this is that *King* Ahaz,
who is ſaid to have provoked the Lord *above all the Kings of* Iſrael *which*
were before him.

2. It is likewiſe a ſore aggravation of Sin, when it is committed after
great Mercies and Deliverances vouchſafed to us. Becauſe this is an argument
of great ingratitude. And this we find recorded as a heavy charge
Judges upon the People of *Iſrael*, that *they remembred not the Lord their God, who*
8.34,35. *had delivered them out of the hand of all their enemies on every ſide; neither*
ſhewed they kindneſs to the Houſe of Jerubbaal, namely *Gideon* who had been
their Deliverer, *according to all the goodneſs which he had ſhewed to* Iſrael. God,
we ſee, takes it very ill at our hands, when we are ungrateful to the *Inſtruments*
of our Deliverance; but much more, when we are unthankful to
Him the *Author* of it. And how ſeverely does *Nathan* the Prophet reproach
David upon this account? *Thus ſaid the Lord God of* Iſrael, *I anointed thee*
King over Iſrael, *and deliver'd thee out of the hand of* Saul, &c. *And if this*
had been too little, I would moreover have done ſuch and ſuch things. *Wherefore*
haſt thou deſpis'd the Commandment of the Lord to do evil in his ſight?
God here reckons up his manifold mercies and deliverances, and aggravates
David's Sin upon this account. And he was very angry likewiſe with *Solomon*
1 Kings for the ſame reaſon, *becauſe he had turned from the Lord God of* Iſrael, *who*
11.9. *had appear'd to him twice.* However we may ſlight the mercies of God,
he keeps a punctual and ſtrict account of them. It is particularly noted, as
2 Chron. a great blot upon *Hezekiah*, that *he returned not again according to the benefits*
32.25. *done unto him.* God takes very ſevere notice of all the unkind and unworthy
returns that are made to Him for his Goodneſs.

Ingratitude to God is ſo unnatural and monſtrous, that we find Him appealing
Iſai.1.2. againſt us for it to the inanimate Creatures: *Hear, O Heavens, and*
give ear O Earth! for the Lord hath ſpoken; I have nouriſh'd and brought up
Children, but they have rebelled againſt me. And then he goes on and upbraids
them with the *Brute* Creatures, as being more grateful to men than
Verſe 3. men are to God. *The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Aſs her Maſters Crib,*
but Iſrael *doth not know, my People doth not conſider.* And in the ſame *Prophet*
Iſai.26.10. there is the like Complaint, *Let favour be ſhewn to the wicked, yet will he*
not

not learn righteouſneſs. In the land of uprightneſs will he deal unjuſtly, and will not behold the Majeſty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not ſee, but they ſhall ſee and be aſhamed. They that will not acknowledge the Mercies of God's Providence, ſhall feel the ſtrokes of his Juſtice.

There is no greater evidence in the World of an intractable diſpoſition, than not to be wrought upon by kindneſs, not to be melted by mercies, not to be obliged by benefits, not to be tamed by gentle uſage. Nay, God expects that his mercies ſhould lay ſo great an obligation upon us, that even a Miracle ſhould not tempt us to be unthankful. *If there ariſe among you a Prophet*, ſays *Moſes* to the People of *Iſrael*, *or a Dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder cometh to paſs, whereof he ſpake to thee, ſaying, let us go after other Gods and ſerve them; thou ſhalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet.* And he gives the reaſon, *becauſe he hath ſpoken to turn you away from the Lord God of* Iſrael, *which brought you out of the Land of* Egypt, *and delivered you out of the Houſe of Bondage.* Deut. 13. 1, 2. Verſe 5.

3. It is a greater aggravation yet, after great Mercies and Judgments to return to the ſame Sins. Becauſe this can hardly be without our ſinning againſt knowledge, and after we are convinced how evil and bitter the Sin is which we were guilty of, and have been ſo ſorely puniſh'd for before. This is an argument of a very perverſe and incorrigible temper, and that which made the Sin of the People of *Iſrael* ſo above meaſure ſinful, that after ſo many ſignal Deliverances, and ſo many terrible Judgments, they fell into the ſame Sin of *murmuring ten times; murmuring* againſt *God* the *Author*, and againſt *Moſes* the glorious *Inſtrument* of their Deliverance out of *Egypt:* which was one of the *two* great *Types* of the *Old Teſtament*, both of *temporal* and *ſpiritual Oppreſſion* and *Tyranny*. Hear with what reſentment God ſpeaks of the ill returns which they made to him for that great Mercy and Deliverance. *Becauſe all theſe men which have ſeen my glory, and my miracles which I did in* Egypt, *and in the Wilderneſs, and have tempted me now theſe ten times, and have not hearkned unto my voice: ſurely they ſhall not ſee the Land which I ſware to their Fathers.* And after he had brought them into the promiſed Land, and wrought great Deliverances for them ſeveral times, how does he upbraid them with their proneneſs to fall again into the ſame ſin of Idolatry? *And the Lord ſaid unto the Children of* Iſrael, *did not I deliver you from the* Egyptians, *and from the* Amorites; *from the Children of* Ammon, *and from the* Philiſtins? *The* Zidonians *alſo and the* Amalekites *and* Maonites *did oppreſs you; and ye cried unto me, and I delivered you out of their hand: yet you have forſaken me, and ſerved other Gods; wherefore I will deliver you no more: go and cry unto the Gods which ye have choſen, let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.* This incenſed God ſo highly againſt them, that they ſtill relaps'd into the ſame Sin of Idolatry after ſo many afflictions and ſo many deliverances. Upon ſuch an occaſion well might the *Prophet* ſay, *Thine own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee, and thy ſins ſhall reprove thee: know therefore, that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God.* It is hardly poſſible but we ſhould know that the wickedneſs for which we have been ſo ſeverely corrected is an evil and bitter thing. Numb. 14. 22. Judges 10. 11, 12, 13, 14. Jer. 2. 19.

Thus much for the *firſt part of the Obſervation*, namely, that it is a fearful aggravation of Sin, after great Judgments and great Deliverances to return to Sin, and eſpecially to the ſame Sins again. I proceed to the

Second part, namely, That this is a fatal preſage of ruin to a People; *Should we again break thy Commandments, and join in affinity with the People of theſe abominations, wouldſt thou not be angry with us till thou hadſt conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* And ſo God threatens Judges 10. 13. the People of *Iſrael* in the *Text* which I cited before, *wherefore I will deliver you no more. Wherefore*; that is, becauſe they would neither be reform'd by the Afflictions wherewith God had exerciſed them, nor by the many wonderful Deliverances which he had wrought for them.

And there is great reaſon why God ſhould deal thus with a People that continues impenitent both under the Judgments and Mercies of God.

1. Becauſe this doth ripen the Sins of a Nation; and it is time for God to put in his Sickle when a People are ripe for ruin. When the meaſure of their Sins is full, it is no wonder if the Cup of his indignation begin to overflow. It is ſaid of the *Amorites*, four hundred years before God brought that fearful ruin upon them, that God deferr'd the extirpation of them, Gen. 15. 16 becauſe *the iniquity of the* Amorites *was not yet full.* When neither the Mercies nor the Judgments of God will bring us to repentance, we are then fit Rom. 9. 22. for deſtruction; according to that of the *Apoſtle*, *What if God willing to ſhew his wrath, and make his power known, endured with much long ſuffering the veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction?* They who are not wrought upon neither by the patience of God's Mercies, nor by the patience of his Judgments, ſeem to be fitted and prepared, to be ripe and ready for deſtruction.

2. Becauſe this incorrigible temper ſhews the Caſe of ſuch perſons to be Iſai. 1. 5. deſperate and incurable. *Why ſhould they be ſmitten any more?* ſays God of the People of *Iſrael*, *they will revolt more and more. How often would I* Matth. 23. 37, 38. *have gathered you,* ſays our *B Saviour* to the *Jews*, *even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings? and ye would not. Behold, your houſe is left to you deſolate*, that is, ye ſhall be utterly deſtroyed; as it hapned forty years after to *Jeruſalem*, and to the whole *Jewiſh* Nation.

When God ſees that all the means which he can uſe do prove ineffectual and to no purpoſe, he will then give over a People, as Phyſicians do their Patients when they ſee that Nature is ſpent and their Caſe paſt remedy. When men will not be the better for the beſt means that Heaven can uſe, God will then leave them to reap the fruit of their own doings, and abandon them to the demerit of their Sin.

That which now remains is to apply this to our ſelves, and to the ſolemn *Occaſion* of this *Day*.

And if this be our *Caſe*, let us take heed that this be not alſo our *Doom* and *Sentence*.

Firſt, The *Caſe* in the *Text* doth very much reſemble *Ours*. And that in *three* reſpects. God hath ſent great Judgments upon us *for our evil deeds* and for our great *treſpaſſes*: He hath *puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities have deſerv'd*: And hath *given* us a very great and wonderful *Deliverance*.

1. God hath inflicted *great Judgments* upon us *for our evil deeds, and for our great Treſpaſſes. Great Judgments*, both for the *quality*, and for the *continuance* of them. It ſhall ſuffice only to mention thoſe which are of a more *ancient* Date. Scarce hath any Nation been more calamitous than this of Ours, both in reſpect of the *Invaſions* and *Conqueſts* of *Foreigners*, and of our own Civil and Inteſtine *Diviſions*. *Four* times we have been *Conquer'd*; By the *Romans*, *Saxons*, *Danes*, and *Normans*. And our *inteſtine Diviſions*

have likewiſe been great and of long continuance. Witneſs the *Barons Wars*, and that long and cruel *Conteſt* between the *two Houſes* of *York* and *Lancaſter*.

But to come nearer to our *own Times*, What fearful Judgments and Calamities of *War*, and *Peſtilence*, and *Fire*, have many of us ſeen? And how cloſe did they follow one another? What terrible havock did the *Sword* make amongſt us for many years? And this not the *Sword* of a *Forreign Enemy*, but of a *Civil War*; the miſchiefs whereof were all terminated upon our ſelves, and have given deep wounds, and left broad ſcars upon the moſt conſiderable Families in the Nation.

——*Alta manent civilis vulnera dextræ.*

This *War* was drawn out to a great length, and had a Tragical end, in the *Murther* of an excellent *King*; and in the *Baniſhment* of his *Children* into a ſtrange Country, whereby they were expoſed to the *Arts* and *Practices* of thoſe of *another* Religion; the miſchievous Conſequences whereof we have ever ſince ſadly labour'd under, and do feel them at this day.

And when God was pleas'd in great mercy at laſt to put an end to the miſerable *Diſtractions* and Confuſions of almoſt *twenty* years, by the happy *Reſtoration* of the *Royal Family*, and our *ancient Government*; which ſeem'd to promiſe to us a laſting Settlement, and all the Felicities we could wiſh: yet how ſoon was this bright and glorious Morning overcaſt, by the reſtleſs and black Deſigns of that ſure and inveterate Enemy of ours, the Church of *Rome*, for the reſtoring of their Religion amongſt us. And there was too much encouragement given to this Deſign, by thoſe who had power in their hands, and had brought home with them a ſecret good will to it.

For this *great Treſpaſs*, and for our many other Sins, God was angry with us, and ſent among us the moſt raging *Peſtilence* that ever was known in this Nation, which in the ſpace of *eight* or *nine* Months ſwept away near a third part of the Inhabitants of this vaſt and populous *City*, and of the *Suburbs* thereof; beſides a great many *thouſands* more in ſeveral parts of the Nation. ***But we did not return to the Lord**, nor ſeek him for all this.*

And therefore, the very next year after, God ſent a terrible and devouring *Fire*, which in leſs than *three* days time laid the greateſt part of this great *City* in aſhes. And there is too much reaſon to believe that *the Enemy* did this; *that* perpetual and implacable *Enemy* of the Peace and Happineſs of this Nation.

And even ſince the time of that dreadful Calamity, which is now above *twenty* years agone, we have been in a continual fear of the cruel Deſigns of that Party, which had hitherto been inceſſantly working under ground, but now began to ſhew themſelves more openly: and eſpecially ſince a *Prince* of that Religion ſucceeded to the Crown, our eyes have been ready *to fail us for fear, and for looking after* thoſe dreadful things that were coming upon us, and ſeem'd to be even at the door. A *fear* which this Nation could eaſly have rid it ſelf of, becauſe they that cauſed it were but a handful in compariſon of us, and could have done nothing without a foreign force and aſſiſtance; had not the Principles of Humanity, and of our Religion too, reſtrain'd us from violence and cruelty, and from every thing which had the appearance of Undutifulneſs to the Government which the Providence of God had ſet over us. An inſtance of the like patience, under the like provocations, for ſo long a time, and after ſuch viſible and open attempts upon them, when they had the Laws ſo plainly on their ſide, I challenge any Nation or Church in the World, from the very foundation of it, to produce. Inſomuch, that if God had not put it into the hearts of our kind *Neighbours*, and of that incomparable *Prince*, who laid and conducted that great Deſign with ſo much skill and ſecrecy, to have appear'd ſo ſeaſonably for our reſcue, our Patience had infallibly, without a Miracle, been our ruine. And I am ſure if our *Enemies* had ever had the like Opportunity in their hands, and had over-balanced us in numbers but half ſo much as we did them, they would never have let it ſlip; but would long ſince have extirpated us utterly, and have *made the remembrance of us to have ceas'd from among men.*

And now if you ask me, for what Sins more eſpecially God hath ſent all theſe Judgments upon us? It will not, I think, become us to be very particular and poſitive in ſuch determinations. Thus much is certain, That we have all ſinn'd and contributed to theſe Judgments; every one hath had ſome hand, more or leſs, in pulling down this vengeance upon the Nation. But we are all too apt to remove the meritorious Cauſe of God's Judgments as far as we can from our ſelves, and our own Party, and upon any ſlight pretence to lay it upon others.

Yet I will venture to inſtance in *one* or *two* things which may probably enough have had a more particular and immediate hand in drawing down the Judgments of God upon us.

Our horrible Contempt of Religion on the one hand, by our *Infidelity* and *Prophaneneſs*; and our ſhameful abuſe of it on the other, by our groſs *Hypocriſie*, and ſheltering great wickedneſs and immoralities under the Cloak and Profeſſion of Religion.

And then, great *Diſſenſions* and Diviſions, great Uncharitableneſs and bitterneſs of Spirit among thoſe of the ſame Religion; ſo that almoſt from the beginning of our happy Reformation the *Enemy* had ſown theſe *Tares*, and by the unwearied Malice and Arts of the Church of *Rome* the Seeds of Diſſenſion were ſcattered very early amongſt us; and a ſowre humour had been fermenting in the Body of the Nation, both upon account of *Religion* and *Civil* Intereſts, for a long time before things broke out into a Civil War.

And more particularly yet; That which is call'd the *great Treſpaſs* here in the *Text*, their *joining in affinity with the People of theſe Abominations*, by whom they had been detain'd in a long Captivity: This, I ſay, ſeems to have had, both from the nature of the thing, and the juſt Judgment of God, no ſmall influence upon a great part of the Miſeries and Calamities which have befallen us. For had it not been for the countenance which *Popery* had by the *Marriages* and *Alliances* of our *Princes*, for two or three Generations together, with thoſe of *that* Religion, it had not probably had a continuance among us to this day. Which will, I hope, now be a good warning to thoſe, who have the Authority to do it, to make effectual proviſion by Law for the prevention of the like inconvenience and miſchief in this Nation for ever.

2. Another *Parallel* between our Caſe and that in the *Text*, is, That *God hath puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities did deſerve.* And this acknowledgment we have as much reaſon to make for our ſelves, as *Ezra* had to do it in behalf of the *Jews*; *Thou our God haſt puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities deſerve.* Thou, our *God*, haſt puniſh'd us; there is the reaſon of ſo much mercy and mitigation. It is *God*, and not *Man*, with whom we have to do; and therefore it is, that we *the children of men are not conſumed.* And it is *our* God likewiſe, to whom we have a more peculiar relation, and with

whom, by virtue of our Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity*, we are in *Covenant*: Thou *our* God haſt puniſh'd us leſs than our Iniquities deſerve. *He* might juſtly have *pour'd forth all his wrath*, and have made *his jealouſie to have ſmoak'd againſt us*, and have *blotted out the remembrance of us from under Heaven*: *He* might have *given us up to the will of our Enemies*, and into the hands of thoſe *whoſe tender mercies are cruelty*: He might have *brought us into the net* which they had ſpread for us, and have *laid* a terrible load of *affliction upon our loins*, and ſuffer'd inſolent *men to ride over our heads*, and *them that hated us* with a perfect hatred, to have *had the rule over us*: But he was graciouſly pleas'd *to remember mercy in the midſt of judgment* and to *repent himſelf for his ſervants*, *when he ſaw that their power was gone*, and that things were come to that extremity, that we were in all humane probability utterly unable to have wrought out our own Deliverance.

3. The laſt *Parallel* between *our* Caſe, and *that* in the *Text*, is the great and wonderful *Deliverance* which God hath wrought for us. And whilſt I am ſpeaking of this, *God is my witneſs*, *whom I ſerve in the Goſpel of his Son*, that I do not ſay one word upon this Occaſion in flattery to men, but in true thankfulneſs to Almighty God, and conſtrain'd thereto from a juſt ſenſe of his great mercy to us all, in this marvellous Deliverance, in this *mighty Salvation which he wrought for us*. So that we may ſay with *Ezra*, *Since thou our God haſt given us ſuch a Deliverance as* THIS: So great, that we know not how to compare it with any thing but it *Self*. *God* hath *given us this Deliverance*. And therefore, *Not unto us*, *O Lord*, *not unto us*, *but to thy Name be the praiſe*. For thou knoweſt, and we are all conſcious to our ſelves, that we did in no wiſe deſerve it; but quite the contrary. *God* hath *given* it, and it ought to be ſo much the welcomer to us, for coming from ſuch a Hand. *It is the Lord's doing*, and therefore ought to be the more *marvellous in our eyes*. It is a Deliverance full of *Mercy*, and I had almoſt ſaid, full of *Miracle*. *The finger of God* was viſibly in it; and there are plain Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate Divine interpoſition. And if we will not *wiſely conſider the Lord's doings*, we have reaſon to ſtand in awe of that Threatning of *His*, *Becauſe they regard not the works of the Lord*, *nor the operation of his hands*, *he ſhall deſtroy them*, *and not build them up*. Pſal. 28. 5.

It was a wonderful *Deliverance* indeed, if we conſider all the Circumſtances of it: The *Greatneſs* of it; and the *ſtrangeneſs* of the *Means* whereby it was brought about; and the *Suddenneſs*, and *Eaſineſs* of it.

The *Greatneſs* of it; it was a great Deliverance, from the greateſt Fears, and from the greateſt Dangers; the apparent and imminent Danger of the ſaddeſt Thraldom and *Bondage*, *Civil* and *Spiritual*; both of *Soul* and *Body*.

And it was brought about in a very *extraordinary* manner, and by very *ſtrange* means: Whether we conſider the *greatneſs* and *difficulty* of the Enterpriſe; or the cloſeneſs and *ſecrecy* of the Deſign, which muſt of neceſſity be communicated at leaſt to the *Chief* of thoſe who were to aſſiſt and engage in it: Eſpecially the *Eſtates* of the *United Provinces*, who were then in ſo much danger themſelves, and wanted more than their own Forces for their own Defence and Security: a kindneſs never to be forgotten by the *Engliſh* Nation. And beſides all this, the difficulties and diſappointments which happen'd, after the Deſign was open and manifeſt, from the uncertainties of *Wind* and *Weather*, and many other *Accidents* impoſſible to be foreſeen and prevented. And yet in Concluſion a ſtrange concurrence of all things, on all ſides, to bring the thing which the Providence of God intended to a happy iſſue and effect.

And we muſt not here forget the many *Worthies* of our *Nation*, who did ſo generouſly run all hazards of Life and Fortune, for the preſervation of our *Religion*, and the aſſerting of our ancient *Laws* and *Liberties*.

Theſe are all ſtrange and unuſual means; but which is ſtranger yet, the very counſels and methods of our Enemies did prepare the way for all this, and perhaps more effectually, than any counſel and contrivance of our own could have done it. For even the *Jeſuits*, thoſe formal *Politicians* by *Book* and *Rule*, without any conſideration or true knowledge of the temper, and intereſt, and other circumſtances of the People they were deſigning upon, and had to deal withal; and indeed without any care to know them: I ſay, the *Jeſuits*, who for ſo long a time, and for ſo little reaſon, have affected the reputation of the deepeſt and craftieſt *States-men* in the World, have upon this great Occaſion, and when their whole *Kingdom of Darkneſs* lay at ſtake, by a more than ordinary *infatuation* and *blindneſs*, ſo outwitted and over-reach'd themſelves in their own Counſels, that they have really contributed as much, or more, to our Deliverance from the Deſtruction which they had deſigned to bring upon us, than all our wiſeſt and beſt Friends could have done.

And then, if we conſider further, how *ſudden* and ſurpriſing it was, ſo that we could hardly believe it when it was accompliſh'd: and like the Children of *Iſrael*, *when the Lord turned again the Captivity of* Zion, *we were like them that dream.* When all things were driving on furiouſly, and in great haſte, then God gave an unexpected check to the Deſigns of men, and ſtopp'd them in their full *cariere*. Who among us could have imagin'd, but a few Months ago, ſo happy and ſo ſpeedy an end of our fears and troubles? God hath at once ſcatter'd all our fears, and outdone all our hopes by the greatneſs and ſuddenneſs of our Deliverance. *O that men would praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.*

And *laſtly*, If we conſider the cheapneſs and eaſineſs of this Deliverance. All this was done without a *Battel*, and almoſt without *Blood*. All the danger is, leſt we ſhould loath it, and grow ſick of it, becauſe it was ſo very eaſie. Had it come upon harder terms, and had we waded to it through a *Red Sea* of Blood, we would have valued it more. But this ſurely is great wantonneſs, and whatever we think of it, one of the higheſt provocations imaginable: For there can hardly be a fouler and blacker Ingratitude towards Almighty God, than to ſlight ſo great a Deliverance, only becauſe it came to us ſo eaſily, and hath coſt us ſo very cheap.

I will mention but one Circumſtance more, which may not be altogether unworthy our obſervation. That God ſeems in this Laſt Deliverance, in ſome ſort to have united and brought together all the great Deliverances which He hath been pleas'd to work for this *Nation* againſt all the remarkable attempts of Popery, from the beginning of our *Reformation*. Our wonderful Deliverance from the formidable *Spaniſh Invaſion* deſign'd againſt us, happen'd in the Year 1588. And now juſt a *hundred* years after, God was pleaſed to bring about this *laſt* great and moſt happy Deliverance. That horrid *Gunpowder Conſpiracy*, without *Precedent*, and without *Parallel*, was deſign'd to have been executed upon the *Fifth* Day of *November*; the ſame Day upon which his *Highneſs* the *Prince of Orange* landed the *Forces* here in *England* which he brought hither for our Reſcue. So that this is a *Day* every way worthy to be ſolemnly ſet apart and joyfully celebrated by this

Church and *Nation*, throughout all Generations; as the fitteſt of all other to comprehend, and to put us in mind to commemorate all the great Deliverances which God hath wrought for Us, from *Popery*, and its inſeparable Companion, *Arbitrary Power*. And we may *then* ſay with the *Holy Pſalmiſt*, Pſal. 118. 23, 24. *This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the Day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Secondly, As the *Caſe* in the *Text* is much like *Ours*, ſo let us take heed that the *Doom* and *Sentence* there be not ſo too. *If after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great treſpaſs, and ſince God hath puniſh'd us leſs than our iniquities* did *deſerve; ſhould we again break* his *Commandments, and join in affinity with the People of theſe Abominations, would* He *not be angry with us till he had conſumed us, ſo that there ſhould be no remnant nor eſcaping?* What could we in reaſon expect after all this, but utter ruin and deſtruction? We may here apply, as St. *Paul* does, God's Dealing with the People of *Iſrael*, to the Times of the *Goſpel*; for he ſpeaks of it as an *Example* and *Admonition* to all Ages to the end of the World. *Now theſe things*, 1 Cor. 10. 6, 7, 9, 10, 11. ſays the *Apoſtle*, *were our Examples, to the intent we ſhould not luſt after evil things, as they alſo luſted; Neither be ye Idolaters, as were ſome of them*, &c. *Neither let us tempt Chriſt, as ſome of them alſo tempted, and were deſtroyed of Serpents.* For the explication of this *paſſage* we muſt have recourſe to the Hiſtory, which gives this account of it. *And the People ſpake againſt* Numb. 21. 5, 6. God, *and againſt* Moſes, *Wherefore have ye brought us up out of* Egypt, *to die in the Wilderneſs?* &c. impeaching *God* and his Servant *Moſes*, as if by this Deliverance they had put them into a much worſe condition than they were in when they were in *Egypt*. *And the Lord ſent fiery Serpents among the People, and they bit the People, and much People of* Iſrael *died.* But how was this a *tempting of Chriſt? Neither let us tempt Chriſt, as ſome of them alſo tempted*; that is, let not us, now under the *Goſpel*, tempt *our Saviour* and *Deliverer*, as the *Iſraelites* did *theirs*, by ſlighting that great Deliverance, and by *ſpeaking againſt* God, *and againſt* Moſes. *Neither murmur ye, as ſome of them alſo murmured, and were deſtroyed of the Deſtroyer.* And how far this may concern Us, and all Others, to *the end of the World*, who ſhall tempt *Chriſt*, the great *Patron* and *Deliverer* of his Church, and *murmur* without cauſe, as the *Iſraelites* did, at the Deliverances which He works for them, and againſt the *Inſtruments* of it, the *Apoſtle* tells us in the next words: *Now* V. 11. *all theſe things happened unto them for Enſamples*, or Types; *and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the World are come. Let us not tempt Chriſt; who* is now beginning the Glorious Deliverance of his *Church* from the Tyranny of *Antichriſt*.

To draw now towards a Concluſion; I will comprehend my Advice to you upon the whole matter, in as few words as I can.

Let us uſe this great *Deliverance* which God hath given us, [*ſuch a Deliverance as this*] *from our Enemies, and from the Hand of all that hate us*; not by uſing Them as they would have done Us, had we fallen under their Power, with great Inſolence, and Rage, and Cruelty; but with great Moderation and Clemency, making as few Examples of Severity as will be conſiſtent with our future ſecurity from the like Attempts upon our *Religion* and *Laws*: And even in the Execution of *Juſtice* upon the greateſt *Offenders*, let us not give ſo much countenance to the ill *Examples* which have been ſet of *Extravagant Fines* and *Puniſhments*, as to imitate thoſe Patterns which with ſo much reaſon we abhor; no, not in the Puniſhment of the *Authors* of them.

And let us endeavour, for once, to be ſo wiſe, as not to forfeit the fruits of this *Deliverance*, and to hinder our ſelves of the benefit and advantage of it, by Breaches and Diviſions among our ſelves. As we have no reaſon to deſire it, ſo I think we can hardly ever hope to underſtand *Popery* better, and the Cruel Deſigns of it, than we do already, both from the long Trial and Experience which we have had of it in this *Nation*, and likewiſe from that diſmal and horrid View which hath of late been given us of the true Spirit and Temper of it in *One* of our Neighbour *Nations*, which hath long pretended to the Profeſſion of the moſt refin'd and *moderate Popery* in the World; but hath now at laſt ſhewed it ſelf in its true Colours, and in the perfection of a perſecuting Spirit; and have therein given us a moſt ſad and deplorable *Inſtance*, of a *Religion* corrupted and degenerated into that which, if it be poſſible, is worſe than *None*.

And ſince, by the undeſerved Mercy of God to us, we have, upon ſuch eaſie terms in compariſon, eſcap'd their Rage and Fury; let us now at length reſolve, never to *join in Affinity with the People of theſe Abominations*; ſince our *Alliances* with them by *Marriage* have had ſo fatal an Influence, both upon the *publick Peace* and Tranquility of the *Nation*, and upon the Welfare alſo of *private Families*. I have known *Many* Inſtances of this kind, but hardly ever yet ſaw *One* that prov'd happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to thoſe *Proteſtant* Families in which ſuch unequal, and, as I think, unlawful *Matches* have been made: Not that ſuch *Marriages* are void in themſelves, but yet for all that ſinful; becauſe of the apparent Danger and Temptation to which thoſe of our *Church* and *Religion* that enter into them do evidently expoſe themſelves, of being ſeduc'd from their Religion; not by the good Arguments which the other can offer to that purpoſe, but by the ill Arts which they have the Confidence and the Conſcience to make uſe of in the making of *Proſelytes*.

And let us pay our moſt hearty and thankful Acknowledgments, chiefly and in the firſt place to *Almighty God*, the bleſſed *Author* of this *Deliverance*; and under *Him*, to that happy *Inſtrument*, whom God hath been pleaſed, in great pity to this ſinful and unworthy *Nation*, to raiſe up on purpoſe for it, his Highneſs the Prince of *Orange*; and to that end did in his All-wiſe Providence lay the Foundation of our then future *Deliverance*, in that *auſpicious Match* which was concluded here in *England*, about eleven years ago, between this Renowned *Prince* and our Excellent *Princeſs*.

This is that moſt Illuſtrious Houſe of *Naſſau* and *Orange*, which God hath ſo highly honoured *above all the Families* of the Earth, to give a Check to the *Two* Great aſpiring *Monarchies* of the *Weſt*, and bold *Attempters* upon the *Liberties* of *Europe*: To the *One*, in the laſt Age; and to the *Other*, in the preſent. As if the *Princes* of this Valiant and Victorious *Line* had been of the *Race* of *Hercules*, born to reſcue Mankind from Oppreſſion, and to quell Monſters.

And *laſtly*, let us beſeech Almighty God, all whoſe Ways and Works are perfect, That he would *eſtabliſh that which he hath wrought*, and ſtill carry it on to further and greater Perfection. Which, after ſuch an *Earneſt* of his Favour and Good Will to us, we have no reaſon to doubt but that he is ready to do for us; if by our own *fickleneſs* and *inconſtancy*, diſguſting the Deliverance now it is come, which we ſo earneſtly deſired before it came; if by our ingrateful *Murmurings* and *Diſcontents*, by our own fooliſh *Heats* and *Animoſities*, kindled and carried on by the ill deſigns of ſome, working upon the tenderneſs and ſcruples of others, under the ſpecious pretences of *Conſcience* and *Loyalty:* I ſay, if by *ſome* or *all* theſe ways we do not refuſe the Bleſſing which God now offers, and defeat and fruſtrate the merciful Deſign of this wonderful Revolution; God will ſtill *rejoice over us, to do us good*, and *think thoughts of Peace towards us, thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give us an expected end* of our long Troubles and Confuſions.

But if we will *not know, in this our day, the things which belong to our Peace*, our Deſtruction will then be of our ſelves; and there will be no need that *God* ſhould be *angry with us*, for we ſhall be undone by our own Differences and Quarrels about the Way and Means of our being ſaved; and ſo *be angry with* one another *till we be conſumed.* Which God, of his infinite Goodneſs, give us all the Grace and Wiſdom to prevent; for his Mercies ſake, in *Jeſus Chriſt*, to whom, with Thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXIII.

Of Forgiveneſs of Injuries, and againſt Revenge.

Preached before the
QUEEN
AT
WHITEHALL,
March 8. 168$\frac{8}{9}$.

MATTH. V. 44.

But I ſay unto you, love your enemies; bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you; pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.

THE *Goſpel* hath promiſed forgiveneſs of Sins to us upon *two* Conditions; That we ſincerely repent of the Sins which we have committed againſt God; and, That we heartily forgive to men the Injuries and Offences which they have been guilty of towards us.

I ſhall at this time, by God's aſſiſtance, treat of the latter of theſe, from the *Words* which I have recited to you; which are part of our *Saviour's* excellent *Sermon upon the Mount.* In which he doth not only explain, but enlarge and perfect the Moral and Natural Law, by adding to it *Precepts* and *Prohibitions* of greater perfection, than either the Law of *Moſes* or the *Natural* Law, in their largeſt extent, did contain.

He forbids *Polygamy*, and *Divorce* except only in caſe of *Adultery*; and likewiſe *Revenge*; none of which were forbidden either by the *Law* of *Nature*, or by the *Law* which was given by *Moſes*.

And to theſe *Prohibitions* our *Bleſſed Saviour* adds ſeveral new *Precepts* of greater perfection than any Laws that were extent before. *But I ſay unto you, love your enemies.* The *Jewiſh* Law commanded them to *love their Neighbour*, meaning their Brethren and thoſe of their own Nation: But our *Saviour*, by commanding us *to love our enemies*, hath in the moſt emphatical manner that can be commanded us to love *all men.* For if any were to be excluded from our Charity, none ſo likely to be ſo as our Enemies. So that after a command to love our Enemies it was needleſs to name any others becauſe men are naturally apt to love thoſe that love them.

I ſay unto you, love your enemies; here the inward affection is requir'd. *Bleſs them that curſe you*; here outward Civility and Affability are requir'd, in oppoſition to rude and uncivil Language; for ſo *bleſſing* and *curſing* do in *Scripture* frequently ſignifie. *Do good to them that hate you*; here real acts of kindneſs are commanded to be done by us to our bittereſt and moſt malicious Enemies. *Pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* Theſe are the higheſt expreſſions of Enmity that can be, *calumny* and *cruelty*; and yet we are commanded to pray for thoſe that touch us in theſe *two* tendereſt Points of all other, our *Reputation* and our *Life*. And to ſecure the ſincerity of our Charity towards our Enemies, we are requir'd to expreſs it by our hearty Prayers to God for them: *To God*, I ſay, before whom it is both impious and dangerous to diſſemble; and from whom we can expect no mercy for our ſelves, if with feigned Lips we beg it of Him for others.

You ſee what is the Duty here requir'd; That we bear a ſincere affection to our moſt malicious and implacable Enemies, and be ready upon occaſion to give real teſtimony of it.

And becauſe this may ſeem a hard duty, and not ſo eaſie to be reconciled either to our Inclination or our Reaſon; I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this Law is not only reaſonable, but much more perfect and excellent, and the practice of it more eaſie and delightful, and upon all accounts much more for our benefit and advantage, than the contrary: And that upon *four* Conſiderations; which I ſhall endeavour to repreſent with their juſt advanatge, and ſo as may, I hope, not only convince our Judgments of the reaſonableneſs of this Precept, but likewiſe bend and ſway our Wills to the obedience and practice of it.

I. If we conſider the nature of the *act* here requir'd, which is to *Love*; which when it is not a mere Paſſion, but under the government of our Reaſon, is the moſt natural, and eaſie, and delightful of all the Affections which God hath planted in Humane Nature: Whereas *ill-will*, and *hatred*, and *revenge*, are very troubleſome and vexatious Paſſions. Both the deviſing of miſchief, and the accompliſhment of it, and the reflection upon it afterwards, are all uneaſie: and the conſequences of it many times pernicious to our ſelves. The very deſign of Revenge is troubleſome, and puts the Spirits into an unnatural fermentation and tumult. The man that meditates it is always reſtleſs, his very ſoul is ſtung, ſwells and boils, is in pain and anguiſh, hath no eaſe, no enjoyment of it ſelf ſo long as this Paſſion reigns. The execution of it may perhaps be attended with ſome preſent pleaſure, but that pleaſure is unreaſonable and brutiſh, momentany and ſhort, like a flaſh of Lightning, which vaniſheth in the twinkling of an Eye.

It is commonly ſaid that Revenge is ſweet, but to a calm and conſiderate mind Patience and Forgiveneſs are ſweeter, and do afford a much more rational and ſolid and durable pleaſure than Revenge. The Monuments of our Mercy and Goodneſs are a far more pleaſing and delightful ſpectacle, than of our Rage and Cruelty. And no ſort of thought does uſually haunt men with more terror, than the reflection upon what they have done in way of Revenge.

Beſides that the conſequences of this Paſſion do commonly prove very prejudicial to our ſelves. For the Revenge of one Injury doth naturally draw on more, and will oblige us for the ſame reaſon to a new Revenge of *them*; and this brings on a perpetual and endleſs circulation of Injuries and

Revenges. So that whoever ſeeks Revenge upon another doth commonly in the iſſue take it upon himſelf, and whilſt he thinks to transfer the Injury which he hath receiv'd from him that did it, he doubles it upon himſelf.

Such, and ſo great are the troubles anp inconveniences of a malicious and revengeful temper: but *there is no torment in Love*, as St. *John* excellently ſays. To be kindly affection'd towards all, to bear no grudge or ill-will, no thought of diſpleaſure or revenge towards any man, is the eaſieſt poſture, the moſt pleaſant ſtate of the Mind. So that if not for their ſakes, yet for our own, we ſhould *Love our Enemies, and do good to them that hate us*; becauſe to be thus affected towards all men, is as great a kindneſs to our ſelves as it is charity to others.

II. If we conſider the qualification of the *Object*; it is ***our Enemy*** whom we are requir'd ***to Love***. In whom though there be ſomething that is juſtly diſguſtful, yet there is ſomething alſo that is lovely; and if we perſiſt in our kindneſs to him, notwithſtanding his enmity to us, the enmity may wear off, and perhaps at length be chang'd into a ſincere and firm friendſhip.

'Tis true indeed, that with regard to our ſelves perſonal enmity towards us is one of the moſt inconvenient qualities that a man can have, but not therefore the worſt in it ſelf. If we could be impartial and lay aſide prejudice, we might perhaps diſcern ſeveral very lovely qualities in him who hates us: And Virtue is to be own'd, and prais'd, and lov'd, even in an Enemy. And perhaps his enmity towards us is not ſo great and inexcuſable a fault, as we apprehend; he is not perhaps our Enemy to that degree, nor ſo altogether without cauſe, as we imagine; poſſibly we have provok'd him, or by his own miſtake, or through the malicious repreſentation of others, he may be induc'd to think ſo: And are not we our ſelves liable to the like miſapprehenſions concerning others? of which we are many times afterwards convinc'd and aſham'd: and ſo may he, and then his enmity will ceaſe, if we will but have a little patience with him, as we always wiſh in the like caſe that others would have with us.

At the worſt, though never ſo ſore and cauſeleſs an Enemy, though never ſo bad a Man, yet he is a Man, and as ſuch, hath ſomething in him which the blindeſt Paſſion cannot deny to be good and amiable. He hath the ſame Nature with our ſelves, which we cannot hate, or deſpiſe, without hatred and contempt of our ſelves. Let a Man's faults be what they will, they do not deſtroy his Nature, and make him ceaſe to be a Man.

The *two* great Foundations of *Love* are *Relation* and *Likeneſs*. *No one thing*, ſays *Tully, is ſo like, ſo equal to another, as one man is to another.* What difference ſoever there may be between us and another man, yea, though he be our Enemy, yet he is ſtill like us in the main; and perhaps, but too like us in that for which we find ſo much fault with him, a proneneſs to offer affronts and injuries.

Dr. Barrow.

And there is an eſſential *Relation*, as well as *Likeneſs*, between one man and another; which nothing can ever diſſolve, becauſe it is founded in that which no man can diveſt himſelf of, in *Humane Nature*. So far is it from being true, which Mr. *Hobbs* aſſerts as the fundamental *Principle* of his *Politicks*, *That men are naturally in a ſtate of war and enmity with one another*; that the contrary *Principle*, laid down by a much deeper and wiſer man, I mean *Ariſtotle*, is moſt certainly true, *That men are naturally akin and friends to each other.* Some unhappy accidents and occaſions may make men Enemies, but *naturally every man is friend to another*: and that is the ſureſt and moſt unalterable reaſon of things which is founded in Nature, not that which ſprings from mutable accidents and occaſions. So that whoever is recommended to us under the notion of a *Man*, ought not to be look'd upon by us, and treated as an Enemy.

Conſider farther that an Enemy, even whilſt he is exerciſing his enmity towards us, may do us many acts of real advantage; which though they do not proceed from kindneſs, yet in truth are benefits. The malicious Cenſures of our Enemies, if we make a right uſe of them, may prove of greater advantage to us, than the Civilities of our beſt Friends. We can eaſily afford, nay the wiſeſt Men can hardly forbear, to love a *Flatterer*; to embrace him, and to take him into our boſom; and yet an open *Enemy* is a thouſand times better and leſs dangerous than *he*. It is good for many men that they have had Enemies, who have many times been to them the happy occaſion of reforming thoſe faults, which none but an Enemy would have taken the freedom, I had almoſt ſaid would have had the Friendſhip, to have told them of.

But what if after all, this Enemy of ours, this hated man, prove to be one of our beſt Friends? For ſo reconciled Enemies uſually are. And if any thing will reconcile an Enemy, Love and Kindneſs will. An obſtinate goodneſs is apt to conquer even the worſt of Men. It is hardly in the nature of man to withſtand the kindneſs of one whom, by all that we could do, we have not been able to make our enemy. After a man hath done the greateſt injury to another, not only to find no revenge following upon it, but the firſt opportunity taken to oblige him, is ſo very ſurprizing, that it can hardly fail to gain upon the worſt diſpoſition, and to melt down the hardeſt temper. So that we ſhould love our Enemies, if not for what they are at preſent, yet for what they may be, and in hope that by theſe means they may in time become our Friends.

III. If we conſider the Excellency and Generoſity of the thing it ſelf. *To love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us*, is the perfection of goodneſs, and the advancement of it to its higheſt pitch. It is the moſt excellent and perfect act of the greateſt and moſt perfect of all Graces and Virtues, I mean *Charity*; which by St. *Paul* is call'd *the bond of perfection*; and by St. *James*, *the perfect* and *the Royal Law*: becauſe it inſpires men with a greatneſs of Mind fit for Kings and Princes, in whom nothing is more admirable than a generous Goodneſs and Clemency, even towards great Enemies and Offenders, ſo far as is conſiſtent with the Publick Good. Love for love is but Juſtice and Gratitude; Love for no love is favour and kindneſs; but Love for hatred and enmity is a moſt Divine Temper, a ſteddy and immutable Goodneſs that is not to be ſtirr'd by provocation, and ſo far from being conquer'd, that it is rather confirm'd by its contrary: For if Hatred and Enmity do not extinguiſh Love, what can? This is Goodneſs indeed; not only without Merit and Obligation, without Invitation or Motive; but againſt all reaſonable expectation, and in deſpite of all Temptation and Provocation to the contrary.

So that to return good for evil and love for hatred, is one of the greateſt arguments of a great Mind, and of deep wiſdom and conſideration: For naturally our *firſt* inclinations and thoughts towards our Enemies are full of Anger and Revenge; but our *ſecond* and wiſer thoughts will tell us, that Forgiveneſs is much more generous than Revenge. And a more glorious Victory cannot be gain'd over another man than this, that when the Injury began on his part, the Kindneſs ſhould begin on ours. If both the ways were equally in our power, yet it is a much more deſirable Conqueſt to ***overcome evil with good***, than with *evil*. By *this*, we can only Conquer our Enemy, and may perhaps fail in that; but by the *other*, we certainly Conquer our ſelves, and perhaps our Enemy too; overcoming him in the nobleſt manner, and walking him gently till he be cool, and without force effectually ſubdu- Dr. *Barrow* ing him to be our Friend. This, as *One* fitly compares it, is like a great and wiſe *General*, by Art and Stratagem, by meer dint of Skill and Conduct, by Patience and wiſe delay; without ever ſtriking a ſtroke, or ſhedding one drop of blood, to vanquiſh an Enemy, and to make an end of the War without ever putting it to the hazard of a Battel.

Revenge is blind and raſh, and does always proceed from impotency and weakneſs of Mind. 'Tis Anger that ſpurs men on to it; and Anger is certainly one of the fooliſheſt Paſſions of Humane Nature, and which commonly Pro.14.29. betrays men to the moſt imprudent and unreaſonable things. So *Solomon* obſerves, *He that is haſty of ſpirit exalteth folly*; and again, *Anger reſteth* Eccl.7.9. *in the boſom of fools*: But to be able to bear provocation, is an argument of great Wiſdom; and to forgive it, of a great Mind: So the ſame *Wiſe-man* Pro.16.32. tells us, *He that is ſlow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a City.* It is a greater thing, in caſe of great Provocation, to calm a mans own ſpirit, than to ſtorm and take a ſtrong City.

Whereas the Angry Man loſeth and lets fall the government of himſelf, and lays the Reins upon the neck of the *Wild Beaſt*, his own brutiſh Appetite and Paſſion; which hurries him on firſt to Revenge, and then to Repentance for the folly which he hath been guilty of in gratifying ſo unreaſonable a Paſſion. For it very ſeldom happens that any man executes an act of Revenge, but the very next moment after he hath done it, he is ſorry for it, and wiſheth he had not done it: Whereas Patience and Forgiveneſs do wiſely prevent both the miſchief to others, and the trouble to our ſelves, which is uſually conſequent upon Revenge.

IV. If we conſider the perfection and prevalency of the *Examples* which the *Goſpel* propoſeth to us, to allure and engage us to the practice of this Duty. And they are the *Examples* of *God* himſelf, and of the *Son of God* in the Nature of Man.

1. The Example of *God* himſelf. The *Scripture* doth frequently ſet before us the goodneſs of Gods common Providence to Sinners, for our Pattern. And this is the Argument whereby our bleſſed *Saviour* preſſeth the Verſe 45. Duty in the *Text* upon us, in the *Verſe* immediately after it; *That ye may be the children of your heavenly Father, who maketh his Sun to riſe on the evil and the good, and his Rain to fall on the juſt and the unjuſt.* The ſame Argument *Seneca* alſo urgeth to the ſame purpoſe. *How many* (ſays he) *are unworthy of the light, and yet the Day viſits them?* And ſpeaking of the *Gods*, *They beſtow* (ſays he) *their benefits upon the unthankful, and are ready to help thoſe who make a bad conſtruction* and uſe *of their kindneſs.* And almoſt in the very words of our *Saviour*, *Etiam ſceleratis Sol oritur*, &c. *The Sun riſeth even upon the moſt vile and profligate perſons, and the Seas are open to Pirates.*

Thus is God affected towards thoſe who are guilty of the greateſt provocations towards Him. He beſtows upon them the gifts of his Common Providence; and not only ſo, but is ready to forgive innumerable Offences to them for *Chriſt*'s ſake. This Pattern the *Apoſtle* propoſeth to our imitation, Eph.4.32. *Be ye kind, tender hearted, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, even* *as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you: Be ye therefore imitaters of God as dear children.* Chap. 5. 1. This temper and diſpoſition of Mind, is the prime excellency and perfection of the Divine Nature; and who would not be ambitious to be like the moſt perfect and beſt of Beings? And ſo our *B. Saviour* concludes this Argument, in the laſt *Verſe* of this *Chapter*, *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, which St. *Luke* renders, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in Heaven is merciful.* So that in that very thing which we think to be ſo hard and difficult, you ſee that we have Perfection it ſelf for our Pattern. And this *Example* ought to be of ſo much greater force with us, by how much greater reaſon there is why *we* ſhould do thus to one another, than why *God* ſhould do thus to us. Our Offences againſt God are more and greater, than any man ever was or could be guilty of towards us: Beſides, that there are many Conſiderations which ought to tye up our hands, and may reaſonably reſtrain us from falling furiouſly upon one another, which can have no place at all in God. We may juſtly fear, that the conſequence of our Revenge may return upon our ſelves, and that it may come to be our own caſe to ſtand in need of Mercy and Forgiveneſs from others: And therefore out of neceſſary caution and prudence, we ſhould take heed not to ſet any bad example in this kind, leſt it ſhould recoil upon our ſelves. We who ſtand ſo much in need of forgiveneſs our ſelves, ought in all reaſon to be very eaſie to forgive others. But now the Divine Nature is infinitely above any real injury or ſuffering. God can never ſtand in need of pity or forgiveneſs; and yet of his own meer Goodneſs, without any intereſt or deſign, how *ſlow* is he to *anger*, and how *ready to forgive*?

And, which comes yet nearer to us, there is alſo the *Example* of the *Son of God*, our *Bleſſed Saviour*; who in our Nature, and in caſe of the greateſt Injuries and Provocations imaginable, did practiſe this Vertue to the height: And all this for our *ſakes*, as well as for our *Example*. So that he requires nothing of us, but what he himſelf ſubmitted to with the greateſt Patience and Conſtancy of Mind; in our *ſtead*, and wholly for our advantage.

He *render'd good for evil* to all Mankind, and ſhew'd greater *Love* to us, whilſt we were Enemies to Him, than ever any man did to his Friend.

He *pray'd* for thoſe *that deſpitefully uſed him and perſecuted him*. And this not upon cool conſideration, after the injury was done, and the pain of his Sufferings was over; but whilſt the ſenſe and ſmart of them was upon him, and in the very agony and bitterneſs of Death: In the height of all his anguiſh, he pour'd out his Soul and Offering for the Sins of Men, and his Blood a Sacrifice to God, for the expiation of the Guilt of that very Sin whereby they ſhed it; pleading with God, in the behalf of his Murderers, the only Excuſe that was poſſible to be made for their *Malice*, that is, their *Ignorance*; and ſpending his laſt breath in that moſt charitable Prayer for them, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

The laſt Declaration which he made of his mind, was *Love* to his *Enemies*; and the laſt Legacy he bequeath'd was an earneſt Requeſt to God for the *Forgiveneſs* of his *Perſecutors* and *Murderers*.

So that if any *Example* ought to be dear to us, and effectually to engage us to the imitation of it, this of our *Bleſſed Saviour* ſhould; ſince the Injuries which he ſuffer'd have ſaved us from ſuffering, and the greateſt *Bleſſing* and *Happineſs* that ever befel Mankind is due to this excellent *Example*: And then with what Confidence, nay with what Conſcience, can we pretend to ſhare in the Benefits of this Example, without imitating the Vertues of it?

Can we ſeriouſly contemplate the exceſſive Kindneſs and Charity of the Son of God to the ſinful Sons of Men, after all our bittereſt Enmity towards him, and moſt cruel and injurious Uſage of him; and all this Charity exerciſ'd towards us, whilſt he was under the actual ſenſe and ſuffering of theſe things: and yet not be provok'd by an Example ſo admirable in it ſelf, and of ſuch mighty advantage to us, *to go and do likewiſe*?

But notwithſtanding the power of theſe *Arguments* to perſwade to this *Duty*, I muſt not diſſemble ſome *Objections* which are, I believe, in many of your minds againſt it; and to which for the full clearing of this matter, it will be fit to give ſome ſatisfaction. And they are theſe:

1. That this Precept in the *Text* does not ſeem ſo well to agree with another of our *Bleſſed Saviour's*, in another *Evangeliſt*, Luke 17. 3,4. *If thy brother treſpaſs againſt thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a day, and ſeven times in a day turn again to thee, ſaying, I repent, thou ſhalt forgive them. Here* our *Bleſſed Saviour* ſeems not to require Forgiveneſs, unleſs he that hath done the Injury declare his Repentance for it: but the *Text* plainly requires us to forgive thoſe who are ſo far from repenting of their Enmity, that they ſtill purſue it, and exerciſe it upon us. Thus our *Lord* teacheth us, and thus *He* himſelf practiſed towards his *Perſecutors*.

But this appearance of Contradiction will quickly vaniſh, if we conſider that *Forgiveneſs* is ſometimes taken chiefly *for abſtaining from Revenge*; and ſo far we are to forgive our Enemies, even whilſt they continue ſo, and though they do not repent: And not only ſo, but we are alſo to pray for them, and to do good offices to them, eſpecially of common Humanity: and this is the meaning of the Precept in the *Text*. But ſometimes *Forgiveneſs* does ſignifie a *perfect Reconciliation* to thoſe that have offended us, ſo as to take them again into our *Friendſhip*; which they are by no means fit for, till they have repented of their Enmity, and laid it aſide. And this is plainly the meaning of the *other Text*.

2. It is further objected, That this ſeems to be a very imprudent thing, and of dangerous conſequence to our ſelves; becauſe by bearing one Injury ſo patiently, and forgiving it ſo eaſily, we invite more; and not only tempt our Enemy to go on, but others alſo by his Example to do the like: Which will make ill natur'd Men to provoke us on purpoſe, with a crafty deſign to wreſt benefits from us: For what better trade can a man drive, than to gain Benefits in exchange for Injuries?

To this I anſwer *three* things:

Firſt, It is to be feared that there are but few ſo very good, as to make this kind return for Injuries: Perhaps, of thoſe that call themſelves *Chriſtians*, not one in a hundred. And he is not a cunning man that will venture to make an Enemy, when there is the odds of a hundred to one againſt him, that this Enemy of his will take the firſt opportunity to take his Revenge upon him.

Secondly, It is alſo on the other hand to be hoped, that but very few are ſo prodigiouſly bad, as to make ſo barbarous a return for the unexpected kindneſs of a generous Enemy. And this is encouragement enough to the practice of this Duty, if there be a probable hope that it will have a good effect; and however, if it ſhould fall out otherwiſe, yet this would not be reaſon enough to diſcourage our goodneſs, eſpecially ſince the kindneſs which we do to our Friends is liable almoſt to an equal Objection, that they may prove ungrateful, and become our Enemies: it having been often ſeen that great Benefits, and ſuch as are beyond requital, inſtead of making a man more a Friend have made him an Enemy.

Thirdly, Our *Saviour* never intended by this Precept, that our goodneſs ſhould be blind and void of all prudence and diſcretion, but that it ſhould be ſo managed, as to make our Enemy ſenſible both of his own fault, and of our favour; and ſo, as to give him as little encouragement, as there is reaſon for it, to hope to find the like favour again upon the like provocation. Our *Saviour* commands us to do the thing, but hath left it to our prudence to do it in ſuch a manner as may be moſt effectual, both to reclaim the Offender, and likewiſe to ſecure our ſelves againſt future and further Injuries.

3. *Laſtly*, It is objected, What can we do more to our beſt Friends, than to love them and bleſs them, than to do good to them and to pray for them? And are we then to make no difference betwixt our Enemies and our Friends?

Yes ſurely; and ſo we may, notwithſtanding this Precept: For there are degrees of Love, and there are Benefits of ſeveral rates and ſizes. Thoſe of the firſt rate we may with reaſon beſtow upon our Friends, and with thoſe of a ſecond or third rate there is all the reaſon in the World why our Enemies ſhould be very well contented. Beſides that we may abſtain from Revenge, yea, and love our Enemy, and wiſh him and do him good; and yet it will not preſently be neceſſary that we ſhould take him into our boſom, and treat and truſt him as our intimate and familiar Friend. For every one that is not our Enemy is not fit to be our Friend; much leſs one that hath been our Enemy, and perhaps is ſo ſtill. There muſt be a great change in him that hath been our Enemy, and we muſt have had long experience of him, before it will be fit, if ever it be ſo, to take him into our Friendſhip.

All that now remains is to make ſome *Inferences* from the Diſcourſe which I have made upon this Argument, by way of Application. And they ſhall be theſe *four*:

I. If we think it ſo very difficult to demean our ſelves towards our Enemies, as the *Chriſtian* Religion doth plainly require us to do; to forgive them, and love them, and pray for them, and to do good offices to them, then certainly it concerns us in prudence to be very careful how we make Enemies to our ſelves. One of the firſt Principles of Humane Wiſdom, in the conduct of our Lives, I have ever thought to be this, To have a few intimate Friends, and to make no Enemies, if it be poſſible, to our ſelves. St. *Paul* lays a great ſtreſs upon this, and preſſeth it very earneſtly. For after he had forbidden Revenge, *Recompence to no man evil for evil.* As if he were very ſenſible how hard a matter it is to bring men to this, he adviſeth in the next words, to prevent, if it be poſſible, the occaſions of Revenge, *If it be poſſible, and as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men:* That is, if we can avoid it, have no Enmity with any man. And that for two weighty Reaſons. I. Rom. 12. 17. V. 18.

The *firſt* I have already intimated; becauſe it is ſo very hard to behave our ſelves towards Enemies as we ought. This we ſhall find to be a difficult Duty to Fleſh and Blood; and it will require great Wiſdom, and Conſideration, and Humility of Mind, for a Man to bring down his Spirit to the Obedience of his Command: For the fewer Enemies we have, the leſs occaſion will there be of conteſting this hard Point with our ſelves.

And the *other* Reaſon is, I think, yet plainer and more convincing, becauſe Enemies will come of themſelves, and let a man do what he can, he ſhall have ſome. Friendſhip is a thing that needs to be cultivated, if we would have it come to any thing; but Enemies, like ill Weeds, will ſpring up of themſelves without our care and toil. *The Enemy*, as our *Saviour* calls the

Devil, will ſow theſe *Tares in the night*, and when we leaſt diſcern it will ſcatter the Seeds of Diſcord and Enmity among men; and will take an advantage either from the Envy, or the Malice, or the Miſtakes of Men, to make them Enemies to one another. Which would make one wonder to ſee what care and pains ſome men will take, to provoke Mankind againſt them; how they will lay about them, and ſnatch at opportunities to make themſelves Enemies, as if they were afraid to let the happy occaſion ſlip by them: But all this care and fear ſurely is needleſs; we may ſafely truſt an ill-natur'd World, that we ſhall have Enemies enough, without our doing things on our part to provoke and procure them.

But above all, it concerns every man in prudence to take great care not to make perſonal Enemies to himſelf; for theſe are the *ſoreſt* and the *ſureſt* of all other, and when there is an opportunity for it, will ſit hardeſt upon us. Injuries done to the Publick are certainly the greateſt, and yet they are many times more eaſily forgiven, than thoſe which are done to particular Perſons. For when Revenge is every bodies work, it may prove no bodies. The general Wrongs which are done to Humane Society, do not ſo ſenſibly touch and ſting men, as perſonal Injuries and Provocations. The *Law* is never angry or in paſſion, and it is not only a great indecency, but a fault, when the *Judges* of it are ſo. Heat of Proſecution belongs to particular Perſons; and it is *their* memory of Injuries, and deſire to Revenge them, and diligence to ſet on and ſharpen the Law, that is chiefly to be dreaded: And if the truth were known, it is much to be fear'd that there are almoſt as few private as publick *Acts* of *Oblivion* paſs'd in the World; and they commonly paſs as ſlowly, and with as much difficulty, and not till the grace and good effect of them is almoſt quite loſt.

II. II. *Secondly*, If we ought to be thus affected towards our Enemies, how great ought our kindneſs, and the expreſſions of it, to be to others; To thoſe who never diſobliged us, nor did us any Injury by word or deed; to thoſe more eſpecially, who ſtand in a nearer relation to us; to our natural Kindred, and to our ſpiritual Brethren to whom we are ſo ſtrongly link'd and united by the common Bond of Chriſtianity; and laſtly, to our Benefactors, and thoſe who have been before hand with us in obligation: For all theſe are ſo many ſpecial Ties and Endearments of men to one another, founded either in *Nature* or *Religion*, or in common *Juſtice* and *Gratitude*. And therefore between all theſe and our Enemies we ought to make a very wide and ſenſible difference, in our Carriage and Kindneſs towards them. And if we do not do ſo, we repreſent our *Saviour* as an unreaſonable Lawgiver, and do perverſly interpret this *Precept* of his contrary to the reaſonable and equitable meaning of it. For whatever degree of Kindneſs is here required towards our Enemies, it is certain that ſo much more is due to others, as according to the true proportion of our tie and obligation to them they have deſerved at our hands: nothing being more certain than that our *Bleſſed Saviour*, the Founder of our Religion, did never intend by any Precept of it to cancel any real Obligation of Nature, or Juſtice, or Gratitude; or to offer Violence in the leaſt to the common Reaſon of Mankind.

III. III. *Thirdly*, Hence we learn the Excellency and the Reaſonableneſs of the *Chriſtian Religion*, which hath carried our Duty ſo high in things which do ſo directly tend to the Perfection of *Humane Nature*, and to the Peace of *Humane Society*; and, which if all things be rightly conſider'd, are moſt agreeable to the cleareſt and beſt Reaſon of Mankind: So that thoſe things which were heretofore look'd upon, and that only by ſome few of the wiſer ſort, as Heroical Inſtances of Goodneſs, and above the common rate of Humanity, are now by the *Chriſtian Religion* made the indeſpenſible Duties of all Mankind. And the Precepts of no other Religion, that ever yet appeared in the World, have advanced Humane Nature ſo much above it ſelf, and are ſo well calculated for the Peace and Happineſs of the World, as the Precepts of the *Chriſtian Religion* are: for they ſtrictly forbid the doing of Injuries, by way of prevention; and in caſe they happen, they endeavour to put a preſent ſtop to the progreſs of them, by ſo ſeverely forbidding the revenging of them.

And yet after all this, it muſt be acknowledg'd to be a very untoward *Objection* againſt the Excellency and the Efficacy of the *Chriſtian Religion*, that the Practice of ſo many *Chriſtians* is ſo unequal to the Perfection of theſe Precepts. For who is there in the Changes and Revolutions of Humane Affairs, and when the Wheel of Providence turns them uppermoſt, and lays their Enemies at their Feet, that will give them any Quarter? Nay, that does not greedily ſeize upon the firſt opportunities of Revenge, and like an *Eagle*, hungry for his Prey, make a ſudden ſtoop upon them with all his force and violence; and when he hath them in his *Pounces*, and at his Mercy, is not ready to tear them in pieces?

So that after all our Boaſts of the Excellency of our Religion, where is the practice of it? This, I confeſs, is a terrible *Objection* indeed; and I muſt intreat of you, *my Brethren*, to help me to the beſt Anſwer to it: Not by any nice *Diſtinctions* and *Speculations* about it, but by the careful and honeſt Practice of this Precept of our Religion.

This was the old *Objection* againſt *Philoſophy*, that many that were Philoſophers in their Opinions were faulty in their Lives: But yet this was never thought by wiſe men to be a good Objection againſt Philoſophy. And unleſs we will lay more weight upon the *Objections* againſt Religion, and preſs them harder than we think it reaſonable to do in any other Caſe, we muſt acknowledge likewiſe, that this *Objection* againſt Religion is of no force. Men do not caſt off the *Art* of *Phyſick*, becauſe many *Phyſicians* do not live up to their own Rules, and do not themſelves follow thoſe Preſcriptions which they think fit to give to others: and there is a plain reaſon for it, becauſe their ſwerving from their own Rules doth not neceſſarily ſignifie that their Rules are not good, but only that their Appetites are unruly, and too hard and headſtrong for their Reaſon: Nothing being more certain than this, That Rules may be very reaſonable, and yet they that give them may not follow them.

IV. The *fourth* and *laſt Inference* from this whole Diſcourſe ſhall be this, That being convinced by what hath been ſaid upon this Argument, of the Reaſonableneſs of this Duty, we would reſolve upon the practice of it, when ever there is occaſion offer'd for it in the courſe of our Lives. I need not to put you in mind, that there is *now* like to be great occaſion for it: I ſhall only ſay, that whenever there is ſo, nothing can be tied more ſtrictly upon us than this Duty is. IV.

It hath often been a great Comfort and Confirmation to me, to ſee the *Humanity* of the *Proteſtant Religion*, ſo plainly diſcovering it ſelf, upon ſo many occaſions, in the practice of the Profeſſors of it. And ſetting aſide all other advantages which *our* Religion hath been evidently ſhewn to have above *Popery* in point of Reaſon and Argument, I cannot for my life but think *that* to be the beſt Religion which makes the beſt Men, and from the nature of its Principles is apt to make them ſo; moſt kind and merciful, and charitable; and moſt free from Malice, and Revenge and Cruelty.

And therefore our *Bleſſed Saviour*, who *knew what was in man* better than any man that ever was, knowing our great reluctancy and backwardneſs to the practice of this Duty, hath urged it upon us by ſuch forcible and almoſt violent Arguments, that if we have any tenderneſs for our ſelves, we cannot refuſe Obedience to it. For he plainly tells us, That no Sacrifice that we can offer will appeaſe God towards us, ſo long as we our ſelves are implacable to Men; *Verſe* 23*d.* of this *Chapter*, *If thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way: firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* To recommend this Duty effectually to us, *He* gives it a preference to all the *poſitive* Duties of Religion: *Firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* Till this Duty be diſcharged, God will accept of no *Service*, no *Sacrifice* at our hands. And therefore our *Liturgy* doth with great reaſon declare it to be a neceſſary Qualification for our Worthy Receiving of the Sacrament, that we be *in Love and Charity with our Neighbours*; becauſe this is a *Moral* Duty, and of eternal Obligation, without which no *poſitive* part of Religion, ſuch as the *Sacraments* are, can be acceptable to God; eſpecially ſince in this *Bleſſed Sacrament* of *Chriſt's* Body and Blood we expect to have the Forgiveneſs of our Sins ratified and confirmed to us: Which how can we hope for from God, if we our ſelves be not ready to forgive one another?

He ſhall have judgment without mercy, ſays St. *James*, *who hath ſhewed no mercy*. And in that excellent *Form of Prayer* which our *Lord* himſelf hath given us, *He* hath taught us ſo to ask Forgiveneſs of God, as not to expect it from Him, if we do not forgive one another. So that if we do not practice this Duty, as hard as we think it is, every time that we put up this *Petition* to God, [*Forgive us our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that Treſpaſs againſt us*;] we ſend up a terrible *Imprecation* againſt our ſelves, and do in effect beg of God not to forgive us. And therefore, to imprint this matter the deeper upon our Minds, our *Bleſſed Saviour* immediately after the recital of this Prayer, hath thought fit to add a very remarkable enforcement of this *Petition*, above all the reſt; *For if*, ſays He, *ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your treſpaſſes.* Matth. 6. 14, 15.

And our *Saviour* hath likewiſe in his *Goſpel* repreſented to us, both the reaſonableneſs of this Duty, and the Danger of doing contrary to it, in a very lively and affecting Parable, deliver'd by him to this purpoſe: Concerning *a wicked Servant*, who, when *his Lord* had but juſt before forgiven him a vaſt Debt of *ten thouſand Talents*, took his poor *Fellow-ſervant by the throat*, and, notwithſtanding his humble Submiſſion and earneſt Intreaties to be favourable to him, haled him to Priſon for a trifling Debt of an *hundred Pence*. Mat. 18. 23. And the *Application* which he makes of this *Parable*, at the end of it, is very terrible, and ſuch as ought never to go out of our Minds; *So likewiſe*, ſays He, *ſhall my heavenly Father do alſo unto you, if ye do not from your hearts forgive every one his brother his treſpaſſes.* V. 35. One might be apt to think at firſt view, that this *Parable* was over done, and wanted ſomething of a due *Decorum*; it being hardly credible, that a man after he had been ſo mercifully and generouſly dealt withal, as upon his humble Requeſt to have ſo huge a Debt ſo freely forgiven, ſhould whilſt the memory of ſo much Mercy was freſh upon him, even the very next moment, handle his *Fellow-ſervant*, who had made the ſame humble Submiſſion and Requeſt to him which he had done to his *Lord*, with ſo much roughneſs and cruelty, for ſo inconſiderable a Sum. This, I ſay, would hardly ſeem credible; did we not ſee in experience how very unreaſonable and unmerciful ſome men are, and with what confidence they can ask and expect great mercy from God, when they will ſhew none to Men.

The greatneſs of the Injuries which are done to us, is the reaſon commonly pleaded by us why we cannot forgive them. But whoever thou art, that makeſt this an Argument why thou canſt not forgive thy Brother, lay thine hand upon thine heart, and bethink thy ſelf how many more and much greater Offences thou haſt been guilty of againſt God: Look up to that Juſt and Powerful Being that is above, and conſider well, Whether thou doſt not both expect and ſtand in need of more Mercy and Favour from *Him*, than thou canſt find in thy heart to ſhew to thine offending Brother?

We have all certainly great reaſon to expect that as we uſe one another, God will likewiſe deal with us. And yet after all this, how little is this Duty practis'd among Chriſtians? And how hardly are the beſt of us brought to love our Enemies, and to forgive them? And this, notwithſtanding that all our hopes of Mercy and Forgiveneſs from God do depend upon it. How ſtrangely inconſiſtent is our practice and our hope? And what a wide diſtance is there between our expectations from God, and our dealings with Men? How very partial and unequal are we, to hope ſo eaſily to be forgiven, and yet to be ſo hard to forgive?

Would we have God, for *Chriſt's* ſake, to forgive us thoſe numberleſs and monſtrous provocations which we have been guilty of againſt His Divine Majeſty? And ſhall we not for *His* ſake, for whoſe ſake we our ſelves are forgiven, be willing to forgive one another?

We think it hard to be oblig'd to forgive great Injuries, and often repeated; and yet *Woe* be to us all, and moſt miſerable ſhall we be to all Eternity, if God do not all this to us, which we think to be ſo very hard and unreaſonable for us to do to one another.

I have ſometimes wonder'd how it ſhould come to paſs, that ſo many perſons ſhould be ſo apt to deſpair of the Mercy and Forgiveneſs of God to them; eſpecially conſidering what clear and expreſs Declarations God hath made of his readineſs to forgive our greateſt Sins and Provocations upon our ſincere Repentance: But the wonder will be very much abated, when we ſhall conſider with how much difficulty men are brought to remit great Injuries, and how hardly we are perſwaded to refrain from flying upon thoſe who have given us any conſiderable provocation. So that when Men look into themſelves, and ſhall carefully obſerve the motions of their own minds towards thoſe againſt whom they have been juſtly exaſperated, they will ſee but too much reaſon to think that Forgiveneſs is no ſuch eaſie matter.

But our comfort in this caſe is, That *God* is not as *Man*; that *his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*; but *as the Heavens are high above the Earth, ſo are his ways above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts.*

And the beſt way to keep our ſelves from deſpairing of God's Mercy and Forgiveneſs to us, is to be eaſie to grant Forgiveneſs to others: And without this, as God hath reaſon to deny Forgiveneſs to us, ſo we our ſelves have all the reaſon in the World utterly to deſpair of it.

It would almoſt tranſport a *Chriſtian* to read that admirable Paſſage of the great *Heathen* Emperour and Philoſopher *M. Aurelius Antoninus*; *Can the Gods*, ſays he, *that are Immortal, for the continuance of ſo many Ages, bear without impatience* M. Aur. Antoni. *l.* 7.

impatience with ſuch and ſo many Sinners as have ever been; and not only ſo, but likewiſe take care of them, and provide for them that they want nothing: And doſt thou ſo grievouſly take on, as one that can bear with them no longer? Thou, that art but for a moment of time; yea, Thou that art one of thoſe Sinners thy ſelf.

I will conclude this whole *Diſcourſe* with thoſe weighty and pungent *Sayings* of the wiſe *Son* of *Syrach*, *He that revengeth ſhall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will certainly retain his Sins. Forgive thy neighbour that hath hurt thee, ſo ſhall thy Sins alſo be forgiven when thou prayeſt. One man beareth hatred againſt another, and doth he ſeek pardon of the Lord? He ſheweth no mercy to a man like himſelf, and doth he ask forgiveneſs of his own Sins?* Eccl. 23. 1, 2, 3, 4.

Enable us, O *Lord*, by thy Grace, to practiſe this excellent and difficult *Duty* of our Religion: And then, *Forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us*: For thy mercies ſake, in *Jeſus Chriſt*; to whom with Thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all *Honour* and *Glory*, *Adoration* and *Obedience*, both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXIV.

The care of our Souls the One thing needful.

Preached before the

King and Queen

AT

HAMPTON-COURT,

April 14th 1689.

Luke X. 42.

But One thing is needful.

IN the accounts of Wiſe men, one of the firſt Rules and Meaſures of humane actions is this, *To regard every thing more or leſs, according to the degree of its conſequence and importance to our happineſs.* That which is moſt neceſſary to that End ought in all reaſon to be minded by us in the firſt place, and other things only ſo far as they are conſiſtent with that great End, and ſubſervient to it.

Our *B. Saviour* here tells us that *there is one thing needful*, that is, one thing which ought firſt and principally to be regarded by us: And what *that* is, it is of great concernment to us all to know, that we may mind and purſue it as it deſerves.

And we may eaſily underſtand what it is by conſidering the Context, and the occaſion of theſe Words, which was briefly this: Our *Saviour*, as He went about preaching the Kingdom of God, came into a certain Village, where He was entertain'd at the Houſe of two devout Siſters. The *elder*, who had the care and management of the Family and the Affairs of it, was imployed in making entertainment for ſuch a *Gueſt*: The *other* ſate at our *Saviour*'s feet, attending to the Doctrine of Salvation which he preach'd.

The *elder* finding her ſelf not able to do all the buſineſs alone, deſires of our *Saviour* that he would command her Siſter *to come and help her*. Upon this our *Saviour* gives her this gentle reprehenſion, *Martha, Martha, Thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.* And what *that* is he declares in the next words, *And* Mary *hath choſen that good part, which ſhall not be taken away from her*; that is, ſhe hath choſen to take care of her Salvation, which is infinitely more conſiderable than any thing elſe.

Our *Saviour* doth not altogether blame *Martha* for her reſpectful care of Him, but commends her *Siſter* for her greater care of her Soul; which made her either wholly to forget, or unwilling to mind other things at that time. So that, upon the whole matter, He highly approves her wiſe choice, in preferring an attentive regard to his *Doctrine*, even before that which might be thought a neceſſary civility to His *Perſon*.

From the *Words* thus explain'd the *Obſervation* which I ſhall make is this.

That the care of Religion and of our Souls is *the one thing neceſſary*, and that which every man is concern'd in the firſt place and above all other things to mind and regard.

This *Obſervation* ſeems to be plainly contain'd in the *Text*. I ſhall handle it as briefly as I can; and then by way of Application ſhall endeavour to perſwade you and my ſelf to mind this *one thing neceſſary*.

And in ſpeaking to this ſerious and weighty Argument I ſhall do theſe *two* things.

Firſt, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls does conſiſt.

Secondly, To convince men of the neceſſity of taking this care.

I. I. I ſhall ſhew wherein this care of Religion and of our Souls doth conſiſt. And this I ſhall endeavour to do with all the plainneſs I can, and ſo as every one that hears me may underſtand and be ſufficiently directed what is neceſſary for him to do in order to his eternal Salvation.

And of this I ſhall give an account in the *five* following *Particulars*, in which I think the main buſineſs of Religion and the due care of our Souls does conſiſt.

Firſt, In the diſtinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and perſwaſion of thoſe things which are neceſſary to be known and believed by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

Secondly, In the frequent examination of our lives and actions, and in a ſincere Repentance for all the errours and miſcarriages of them.

Thirdly, In the conſtant and daily exerciſe of Piety and Devotion.

Fourthly, In avoiding thoſe things which are pernicious to our Salvation, and whereby men do often hazard their Souls.

Fifthly, In the even and conſtant practice of the ſeveral Graces and Vertues of a good Life.

I. The due care of Religion and our Souls does conſiſt in the diſtinct knowledge, and in the firm belief and perſwaſion of thoſe things which are neceſſary to be known and believ'd by us in order to our eternal Salvation.

For this knowledge of the neceſſary Principles and Duties of Religion is the foundation of all good practice, wherein the life of Religion doth conſiſt. And without this no man can be truly Religious. *Without faith*, ſaith the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews*, it is *impoſſible to pleaſe God: For he that cometh to God, muſt believe that He is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek Him*. Now theſe two expreſſions of *pleaſing God* and *ſeeking Him*, are plainly of the ſame importance, and do both of them ſignifie *Religion*, or the *Worſhip* and Service of God; which doth antecedently ſuppoſe our firm belief and perſwaſion of theſe *two* fundamental *Principles* of all Religion, That *there is a God*, and, That *He will reward thoſe that ſerve him*: Becauſe unleſs a man do firſt believe theſe, there would neither be ground nor encouragement for any ſuch thing as Religion. Heb.11.6.

And this knowledge of the neceſſary *Principles* of Religion our *B. Saviour* calls *Eternal Life*, becauſe it is ſo fundamentally neceſſary in order to our attaining of it: *This is life eternal*, ſays *He*, *to know thee, the only true God; and Him whom thou haſt ſent, Jeſus Chriſt*, that is, to be rightly inſtructed in the knowledge of *the only true God*, and *of his Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord*? Under which *two* general *Heads* are comprehended all the neceſſary Principles both of the *Natural* and of the *Chriſtian* Religion. John 17.3.

And to the attaining of this knowledge which is abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, no ſuch extraordinary pains and ſtudy is requir'd; but only a teachable diſpoſition, and a due application of mind. For whatever in Religion is neceſſary to be known by all, muſt in all reaſon be plain and eaſie, and lye level to all capacities; otherwiſe we muſt ſay, that God *who would have all men to be ſaved*, hath not provided for the Salvation of all men. And therefore, now that the knowledge of the true God and the light of Chriſtianity are ſhed abroad in the World, all that enjoy the Goſpel are, or may be, ſufficiently inſtructed in all things neceſſary to their happineſs: unleſs ſuch care be uſed, as is in the Church of *Rome*, to *take away the key of knowledge*, and to lock up the Scriptures from the People in an unknown Tongue; and this, as they pretend, upon a very charitable conſideration, only it is to be hop'd that it is not true, that the generality of Mankind are mad, and have need to be kept in the dark. But ſuppoſing men to be allowed thoſe means of knowledge which God affords, and hath appointed for us, the great difficulty doth not commonly lie in mens Underſtandings, but in their Wills: Only when men know theſe things, they muſt attend to them and conſider them; that the light which is in their Underſtandings may warm their Hearts, and have its due influence upon their Lives.

II. The due care of our Souls conſiſts in the frequent Examination of our lives and actions, and in a ſincere Repentance for all the errours and miſcarriages of them: In a more *particular* and deep humiliation and repentance for deliberate and wilful ſins, ſo far as we can call them to our remembrance; and in a *general* repentance for ſins of *Ignorance*, and *Infirmity*, and *Surprize*. In the exerciſe whereof we are always to remember, that the nature of true Repentance doth not conſiſt only in an humble confeſſion of our ſins to God, and a hearty trouble and contrition for them; but chiefly in the ſtedfaſt purpoſe and reſolution of a better life, and in proſecution of this reſolution, in actual reformation and amendment.

By the conſtant exerciſe hereof, we are put into a ſafe condition; provided that we perſevere in this holy reſolution and courſe: But if we ſtill retain the love and practice of any known ſin, or if after we have taken up theſe good reſolutions we return again to an evil courſe; this is a clear evidence, either that our Repentance was not ſincere at firſt, or that we are relaps'd into our former ſtate: And then our Souls are ſtill in apparent danger of being loſt, and will continue in that dangerous ſtate, till we have renew'd our Repentance and made it good in the following courſe of our lives.

III. The due care of our Souls conſiſts in the conſtant and daily exerciſe of piety and devotion, both in private, and in publick if there be opportunity for it, eſpecially at proper times and upon more ſolemn occaſions: By fervent prayer to God, and by hearing and reading the Word of God with reverence and godly fear: By frequenting his Publick Worſhip, and demeaning our ſelves in it with that ſolemnity and ſeriouſneſs which becomes the preſence and ſervice of the great and glorious Majeſty of God, who obſerves our behaviour and ſees into our hearts: And by receiving the B.Sacrament, as often as we have opportunity, with due preparation and devotion of mind.

For theſe are not only outward teſtimonies of our inward piety, but they are means likewiſe appointed by God to improve and confirm us in holineſs and goodneſs. And whoever neglects theſe Duties of Religion, or performs them in a ſlight and ſuperficial manner, doth plainly ſhew that he hath neither a due ſenſe of God, nor care of himſelf: For in vain does any man pretend that he does in good earneſt deſign the End, when he neglects the beſt and moſt proper means for the attainment of it.

IV. The due care of our Souls conſiſts alſo in avoiding thoſe things which are pernicious to our Salvation,and whereby men do often hazard their Souls. Such in general is the practice of any known Sin. By this we do, as it were, run upon the Swords point, and do endanger our Salvation as much as a deep wound in our Body would do our Life: And though ſuch a wound may perhaps be cur'd afterwards by Repentance, yet no man that commits any wilful Sin knows the diſmal conſequence of it, and whither by degrees it may carry him at laſt: For upon ſuch a provocation God may leave the Sinner to himſelf, and withdraw his grace from him, and give him up to a hard and impenitent heart to proceed from evil to worſe,and from one wickedneſs to another, till he be finally ruin'd. So dangerous a thing is it knowingly to offend God, and to commit any deliberate act of Sin.

More particularly, an inordinate love of the World is very pernicious to the Souls of men; becauſe it quencheth the heavenly life; and fills our minds with earthly cares and deſigns; it tempts men to forſake God and Religion when their worldly intereſts come in competition with them; and betrays them to fraud, and falſhood, and all kind of injuſtice, and *many other hurtful luſts which drown the Soul in perdition.*

But beſides theſe dangers which are more viſible and apparent, there is another which is leſs diſcernible becauſe it hath the face of Piety; and that is *Faction* in Religion: By which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal about things wherein Religion either doth not at all, or but very little conſiſt. For beſides that this temper is utterly inconſiſtent with ſeveral of the moſt eminent *Chriſtian* Graces and Vertues, as *humility*, *love*, *peace*, *meekneſs*, and *forbearance* towards thoſe that differ from us; it hath likewiſe *two* very great miſchiefs commonly attending upon it, and both of them pernicious to Religion and the Souls of men.

Firſt, That it takes ſuch men off from minding the more neceſſary and eſſential parts of Religion. They are ſo zealous about ſmall things, *the tithing of mint and anniſe and cummin*, that they *neglect the weightier things of the Law*, *Faith* and *Mercy*, *and Judgment*, and *the Love* of God: They ſpend ſo much of their time and heat about things doubtful, that they have no leiſure to mind the things that are neceſſary: And are ſo concern'd about little *Speculative Opinions* in Religion, which they always call *fundamental Articles* of Faith, that the Practice of Religion is almoſt wholly neglected by them: And they are ſo taken up in ſpying out and cenſuring Error and Hereſie in others, that they never think of curing thoſe Luſts and Vices and Paſſions which do ſo viſibly reign in themſelves. Deluded People! that do not conſider that the greateſt Hereſie in the World is a wicked life, becauſe it is ſo directly and fundamentally oppoſite to the whole deſign of the Chriſtian Faith and Religion: And that do not conſider, that God will ſooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his Underſtanding than one fault of his Will.

Secondly, Another great miſchief which attends this temper is, that men are very apt to interpret this zeal of theirs againſt others to be great Piety in themſelves, and as much as is neceſſary to bring them to Heaven; and to think that they are very Religious, becauſe they keep a great ſtir about maintaining the Out-works of Religion, when it is ready to be ſtarv'd within; and that there needs no more to denominate them good Chriſtians, but to be of ſuch a Party, and to be liſted of ſuch a Church, which they always take for granted to be the only true one; and then zealouſly to hate and uncharitably to cenſure all the reſt of Mankind.

How many are there in the World, that think they have made very ſure of Heaven, not by the old plain way of leaving their ſins and reforming their lives, but by a more cloſe and cunning way of carrying their Vices along with them into another Church, and calling themſelves *good Catholicks*, and all others *Hereticks*? And that having done this, they are in a ſafe condition; as if a mere Name would admit a man into Heaven, or as if there were any Church in the World that had this phantaſtical Priviledge belonging to it, that a wicked man might be ſaved for no other reaſon but becauſe he is of it.

Therefore, as thou valueſt thy Soul, take heed of engaging in any Faction in Religion; becauſe it is an hundred to one but thy zeal will be ſo employed about leſſer things, that the main and ſubſtantial parts of Religion will be neglected: Beſides, that a man deeply engag'd in heats and controverſies of this nature, ſhall very hardly eſcape being poſſeſs'd with that Spirit of uncharitableneſs and contention, of peeviſhneſs and fierceneſs, which reigns in all Factions, but more eſpecially in thoſe of Religion.

V. The due care of our Souls conſiſts in the even and conſtant practice of the ſeveral Graces and Vertues of a good life; or, as the *Apoſtle* expreſſeth it, in *exerciſing our ſelves always to have a conſcience void of offence towards God and Men.* For herein is Religion beſt ſeen, in the equal and uniform practice of every part of our duty: Not only in ſerving God devoutly, but in demeaning our ſelves peaceably and juſtly, kindly and charitably towards all men: Not only in reſtraining our ſelves from the outward act of ſin, but in mortifying the inward inclination to it, in ſubduing our Luſts, and governing our Paſſions, and bridling our Tongues. As he that would have a prudent care of his health and life, muſt not only guard himſelf againſt the chief and common diſeaſes which are incident to men, and take care to prevent them; but muſt likewiſe be careful to preſerve himſelf from thoſe which are eſteemed leſs dangerous, but yet ſometimes do prove mortal: He muſt not only endeavour to ſecure his Head and Heart from being wounded, but muſt have a tender care of every part; there being hardly any diſeaſe or wound ſo ſlight but that ſome have died of it: In like manner, the care of our Souls conſiſts in an univerſal regard to our Duty, and that we be defective in no part of it: Though we ought to have a more eſpecial regard to thoſe Duties which are more conſiderable, and wherein Religion doth mainly conſiſt; as *Piety* towards God, *Temperance* and *Chaſtity* in regard of our ſelves, *Charity* towards the Poor, *Truth* and *Juſtice*, *Goodneſs* and *Kindneſs* towards all men: But then no other *Grace* and *Vertue*, though of an inferiour rank, ought to be neglected by us.

And thus I have endeavour'd, as plainly and briefly as I could, to declare to you in what Inſtances the due care of Religion and our Souls doth chiefly conſiſt.

And I would not have any man think that all this is an eaſie buſineſs and requires but little time to do it in, and that a ſmall degree of diligence and induſtry will ſerve for this purpoſe : To maſter and root out the inveterate Habits of Sin, to bring our Paſſions under the command and government of our Reaſon, and to attain to a good degree of every Chriſtian Grace and Vertue : That *Faith* and *Hope* and *Charity* ; *Humility* and *Meekneſs* and *Patience* may all *have their perfect work* ; and that, as St. *James* ſays, we *may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing* ; nothing that belongs to the perfection of a good man, and of a good Chriſtian. And this, whenever we come to make the trial, we ſhall find to be a great and a long work.

Some indeed would make Religion to be a very ſhort and eaſie buſineſs, and to conſiſt only in believing what Chriſt hath done for us, and relying confidently upon it : Which is ſo far from being the true Notion of Chriſtian *Faith*, that, if I be not much miſtaken, it is the very Definition of *Preſumption*. For the *Bible* plainly teacheth us, that unleſs our Faith *work by Charity*, and *purifie our hearts*, and reform our lives ; unleſs like *Abraham's* Faith it be *perfected by works*, it is but a *dead Faith*, and will in no wiſe avail to our Juſtification and Salvation. And our *B. Saviour*, the great *Author and finiſher of our Faith*, hath no where, that I know of, ſaid one word to this purpoſe, That Faith ſeparated from Obedience and a good Life will ſave any man : But He hath ſaid very much to the contrary, and that very plainly. For he promiſeth Bleſſedneſs to none, but thoſe who live in the practice of thoſe Chriſtian Graces and Vertues which are particularly mention'd by Him in the Matth. 5. 3, 4, &c. beginning of his excellent *Sermon* upon the Mount ; of *Humility*, and *Repentance*, and *Meekneſs*, and *Righteouſneſs*, and *Mercifulneſs*, and *Purity*, and *Peaceableneſs*, and *Patience* under Perſecution and Sufferings for Righteouſneſs Matt. 7. 21. ſake. And afterwards in the ſame *Sermon*, *Not every one*, ſaith He, *that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that* V. 24. *doth the Will of my Father which is in heaven.* And again, *Whoſoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him unto a wiſe man* V. 26, 27. *which built his houſe upon a Rock.* And afterwards, he tells us, that whoſoever builds his hopes of Eternal Happineſs upon any other foundation, than the Faith of the Goſpel and the Practice of its Precepts, doth *build his houſe upon the Sand* ; which when it comes to be tried by the *Rain* and the *Winds*, will Joh. 13. 17. *fall ; and the fall of it will be great.* And elſewhere ; *If ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them.* And he does very ſeverely check the vain confidence and preſumption of thoſe, who will needs rely upon Him for Salvation Luke 6. 46. without keeping his Commandments ; *Why call ye me*, ſays He, *Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I ſay ?*

Does any man think that he can be ſaved without loving God and Chriſt? 1 Joh. 5. 3. *And this*, ſaith St. *John*, *is the love of God, that we keep his Commandments :* 1 Joh. 2. 4. and again, *He that ſaith I know him*, and by the ſame reaſon, *he that ſaith I love him, and keepeth not his Commandments, he is a lyar, and the truth is not* Joh. 14. 15. *in him.* *If ye love me*, ſaith our *B. Lord*, *keep my Commandments* : And again, V. 21. *He that hath my Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.*

Does any man think, that any but the children of God ſhall be heirs of Eternal 1 Joh. 3. 7. Life ? Hear then what St. *John* ſaith, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as he is righteous :* And again, V. 10. *In this the children of God are manifeſt, and the children of the Devil, he that doth not righteouſneſs is not of God.*

In a word, this is the perpetual tenour of the *Bible*, from the beginning Gen. 3. 7. of it to the end, *If thou doſt well* ſaith God to *Cain*, *ſhalt thou not be accepted?* And Iſa. 3. 10, 11. again, *Say ye to the righteous, it ſhall be well with him, for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings : Wo unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands ſhall be given him.* And in the *Goſpel*, when the *young man* came to our

Saviour to be inſtructed by Him *what good thing he ſhould do that he might* inherit eternal life, our *Lord* gives him this ſhort and plain advice, *If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments.* Mat.19.17. And in the very laſt *Chapter* of the *Bible* we find this ſolemn declaration, *Bleſſed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the Tree of Life, and enter in through the Gates into the City,* that is, into Heaven, which the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* calls the *City which hath foundations, whoſe builder and maker is God.* So vain and groundleſs is the imagination of thoſe, who truſt to be ſaved by an idle and ineffectual Faith, without holineſs and obedience of Life.

II.

II. I proceed now in the *Second* place to convince us all, if it may be, of the neceſſity of minding Religion and our Souls. When we call any thing neceſſary, we mean that it is ſo in order to ſome End, which cannot be attained without it. We call thoſe things the neceſſaries of Life, without which men cannot ſubſiſt and live in a tolerable condition in this World: And that is neceſſary to our eternal happineſs, without which it cannot be attain'd. Now happineſs being our chief End, whatever is neceſſary to *that* is more neceſſary than any thing elſe; and in compariſon of *that*, all other things not only may, but ought to be neglected by us.

Now to convince men of the neceſſity of Religion, I ſhall briefly ſhew, That it is a certain way to happineſs: That it is certain that there is no other way but this: And that if we neglect Religion, we ſhall certainly be extremely and for ever miſerable.

Firſt, That Religion is a certain way to happineſs. And for this we have God's expreſs Declaration and Promiſe, the beſt aſſurance that can be. He *that cannot lye* hath promiſed *eternal life*, *to them who by patient continuance in well-doing ſeek for glory and honour and immortality.* All the happineſs that we can deſire, and of which the nature of man is capable is promiſed to us upon the terms of Religion, upon our *denying ungodlineſs, and worldly luſts, and living ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godlily in this preſent world:* A mighty reward for a little ſervice; an eternity of happineſs, of joys unſpeakable and full of glory, for the diligence and induſtry of a few days: A happineſs large as our wiſhes, and laſting as our Souls.

Secondly, 'Tis certain alſo that there is no other way to happineſs but this. He, who alone can make us happy, hath promiſed it to us upon theſe and no other terms. He hath ſaid, That *if we live after the fleſh, we ſhall die; but if by the ſpirit we mortifie the deeds of the fleſh, we ſhall live:* That *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord:* And, that he that lives in the habitual Practice of any Vice, of *Covetouſneſs*, or *Adultery*, or *Malice*, or *Revenge*, *ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of God:* And we have [illegible] reaſon to believe Him concerning the terms of this happineſs, and the means of attaining it, by whoſe favour and bounty alone we hope to be made partakers of it.

And if God had not ſaid it in his Word, yet the nature and reaſon of the thing doth plainly declare it. For Religion is not only a condition of our happineſs, but a neceſſary qualification and diſpoſition for it. We muſt be like to God in the temper of our minds, before we can find any felicity in the enjoyment of him. Men muſt be purged from their Luſts, and from thoſe ill-natur'd and devilliſh Paſſions of *Malice*, and *Envy*, and *Revenge*, before they can be fit company for their heavenly Father, and meet to dwell with him *who is love, and dwells in love.*

Thirdly, If we neglect Religion, we ſhall certainly be extremely and for ever miſerable. The *Word of Truth* hath ſaid it, that *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh ſhall be upon every ſoul of man that doth evil.* Nay, if

God ſhould hold his hand, and ſhould inflict no poſitive torment upon ſinners, yet they could not ſpare themſelves, but would be their own Executioners and Tormentors. The guilt of that wicked Life which they had led in this World, and the ſtings of their own Conſciences muſt neceſſarily make them miſerable, whenever their own Thoughts are let looſe upon them; as they will certainly be in the other World, when they ſhall have nothing either of pleaſure or buſineſs to divert them.

So that if we be concern'd, either to be happy hereafter, or to avoid thoſe Miſeries which are great and dreadful beyond all imagination, it will be neceſſary for us to mind Religion; without which we can neither attain that Happineſs, nor eſcape thoſe Miſeries.

All that now remains, is to perſwade you and my ſelf ſeriouſly to mind this *one thing* neceſſary. And to this end, I ſhall apply my Diſcourſe to two ſorts of Perſons; thoſe who are remiſs in a matter of ſo great concernment, and thoſe who are groſly careleſs, and mind it not at all.

Firſt, To thoſe who are remiſs in a matter of ſuch vaſt concernment: Who mind the buſineſs of Religion in ſome degree, but not ſo heartily and vigorouſly as a matter of ſuch infinite conſequence doth require and deſerve.

And here I fear the very beſt are greatly defective; and ſo much the more to be blamed, by how much they are more convinc'd than others, of the neceſſity of a Religious and Holy Life, and that without this no man ſhall ever be admitted into the Manſions of the Bleſſed: They believe likewiſe, that according to the degrees of every mans holineſs and vertue in this Life, will be the degrees of his happineſs in the other; that *he that ſows ſparingly ſhall reap ſparingly, and he that ſows plentifully ſhall reap plentifully*; and that the meaſure of every man's reward ſhall be according to his improvement of the Talents that were committed to him.

But how little do men live under the power of theſe convictions? And notwithſtanding we are allur'd by the moſt glorious promiſes and hopes, and aw'd by the greateſt fears, and urg'd by the moſt forcible argument in the World, the evident neceſſity of the thing; Yet how faintly do we run the Race that is ſet before us? How frequently and how eaſily are we ſtop'd or diverted in our Chriſtian Courſe by very little Temptations? How cold, and how careleſs, and how inconſtant are we in the Exerciſes of Piety, and how defective in every part of our Duty? Did we act reaſonably, and as Men uſe to do in matters of much leſs moment, we could not be ſo indifferent about a thing ſo neceſſary, ſo ſlight and careleſs in a matter of Life and Death, and upon which all Eternity does depend.

Let us then ſhake off this ſloth and ſecurity, and reſolve to make that the great buſineſs of Time, which is our great concernment to all Eternity: And when we are immers'd in the cares and buſineſs of this Life, and *troubled about many things*, let this thought often come into our minds, That there is *one thing needful*, and which therefore deſerves above all other things to be regarded by us.

Secondly, There are another ſort of Perſons, who are groſly careleſs of this *one thing neceſſary*, and do not ſeem to mind it at all: Who go on ſecurely in an evil Courſe, as if either they had no Souls, or no concernment for them. I may ſay to theſe as the Maſter of the Ship did to *Jonah*, when he was faſt aſleep in the Storm, *What meaneſt thou, O ſleeper? Ariſe and call upon thy God.* When our Souls are every moment in danger of ſinking, it is high time for us to awake out of ſleep, to ply every Oar, and to uſe all poſſible care and induſtry to ſave a thing ſo precious from a danger ſo threatning and ſo terrible.

We are apt enough to be ſenſible of the force of this Argument of neceſſity in other caſes, and very carefully to provide againſt the preſſing neceſſities of this life, and how to avoid thoſe great temporal evils of poverty and diſgrace, of pain and ſuffering: But the great neceſſity of all, and that which is mainly incumbent upon us, is to provide for Eternity, to ſecure the everlaſting happineſs, and to prevent the endleſs and inſupportable miſeries of another World. *This, this*, is the *one thing neceſſary*; and to *this* we ought to bend and apply all our care and endeavours.

If we would fairly compare the neceſſity of things, and wiſely weigh the concernments of this Life and the other in a juſt and equal balance, we ſhould be aſhamed to miſplace our diligence and induſtry as we do; to beſtow our beſt thoughts and time about theſe vain and periſhing things, and to take no care about that *better part which cannot be taken from us*. Fond and vain men that we are! who are ſo ſolicitous how we ſhall paſs a few days in this world, but matter not what ſhall become of us for ever.

But as careleſs as we are now about theſe things, time will come when we ſhall ſadly lay them to heart, and when they will touch us to the quick: When we come to lie upon a Death-bed, if God ſhall be pleas'd to grant us then ſo much time and uſe of our Reaſon as to be able to recollect our ſelves, we ſhall then be convinc'd how great a neceſſity there was of minding our Souls, and of the prodigious folly of neglecting them, and of our not being ſenſible of the value of them, till we are ready to deſpair of ſaving them.

But, bleſſed be God, this is not yet our caſe, though we know not how ſoon it may be. Let us then be wiſe, and conſider theſe things in time, leſt Death and Deſpair ſhould overtake and oppreſs us at once.

You that are young, be pleas'd to conſider that this is the beſt opportunity of our Lives, for the minding and doing of this work. You are now moſt capable of the beſt impreſſions, before the habits of Vice have taken deep root, and your hearts *be harden'd through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*: This *is the acceptable time, this is the day of ſalvation*.

And there is likewiſe a very weighty conſideration to be urg'd upon thoſe that are old, if there be any that are willing to own themſelves ſo; that this is the laſt opportunity of their lives, and therefore they ſhould lay hold of it, and improve it with all their might: For it will ſoon be paſt, and when it is, nothing can call it back.

It is but a very little while before we ſhall all certainly be of this mind, that the beſt thing we could have done in this World, was to prepare for the other. Could I repreſent to you that inviſible World which I am ſpeaking of, you would all readily aſſent to this counſel, and would be glad to follow it and put it ſpeedily in practice. Do but then open your eyes, and look a little before you to the things which are not far off from any of us, and to many of us may perhaps be much nearer than we are aware: Let us but judge of things now, as we ſhall all ſhortly judge of them: And let us live now, as after a few days we ſhall every one of us wiſh with all our Souls that we had liv'd; and be as ſerious, as if we were ready to ſtep into the other World, and to enter upon that change which Death will quickly make in every one of us. Strange ſtupidity of Men! That a change ſo near, ſo great, ſo certain, ſhould affect us ſo coldly, and be ſo little conſider'd and provided for by us: That the things of Time ſhould move us ſo much, and the things of Eternity ſo little. What will we do when this change comes, if we have made no preparation for it?

If we be Chriſtians, and do verily believe the things which I am ſpeaking of, and that after a few days more are paſs'd Death will come, and draw aſide that thick Veil of Senſe and Security which now hides theſe things from us; and ſhew us that fearful and amazing ſight which we are now ſo loth to think upon: I ſay, if we believe this, it is time for us to be wiſe and ſerious.

And happy that man, who in the days of his health hath retir'd himſelf from the noiſe and tumult of this world, and made that careful preparation for Death and a better Life, as may give him that conſtancy and firmneſs of Spirit, as to be able to bear the thoughts and approaches of his great Change without amazement; and to have a mind almoſt equally poiz'd between that ſtrong inclination of Nature which makes us deſirous to live, and that wiſer dictate of Reaſon and Religion which ſhould make us willing and contented to die whenever God thinks fit.

Many of us do not now ſo clearly diſcern theſe things, becauſe our eyes are dazzel'd with the falſe light and ſplendor of earthly felicity: But *this* aſſuredly is more worth than all *the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them*, to be able to poſſeſs our Souls at ſuch a time, and to be at perfect Peace with our own minds, having *our hearts fixed truſting in God:* To have our Accounts made up, and Eſtate of our immortal Souls as well ſettled and ſecur'd, as by the aſſiſtance of God's Grace humane care and endeavour, though mix'd with much humane frailty, is able to do.

And if we be convinc'd of theſe things, we are utterly inexcuſable if we do not make this our firſt and great care, and prefer it to all other intereſts whatſoever. And to this end, we ſhould reſolutely diſentangle our ſelves from worldly cares and incumbrances; at leaſt ſo far, that we may have competent liberty and leiſure to attend this great concernment, and to put our Souls into a fit poſture and preparation for another World: That when Sickneſs and Death ſhall come, we may not act our laſt part indecently and confuſedly, and have a great deal of work to do when we ſhall want both time and all other advantages to do it in: Whereby our Souls, when they will ſtand moſt in need of comfort and ſupport, will unavoidably be left in a trembling and diſconſolate condition, and in an anxious doubtfulneſs of mind what will become of them for ever.

Matth. 6. 31,33.

To conclude, This care of Religion and our Souls is a thing ſo neceſſary, that in compariſon of it we are to neglect the very neceſſaries of Life. So our *Lord* teacheth us, *Take no thought ſaying, what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed? But ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs.* The Calls of God and Religion are ſo very preſſing and importunate, that they admit of no delay or excuſe whatſoever: This our *Saviour* ſignifies to us by denying the *Diſciple*, whom he had call'd to follow *him*, leave to go and bury his Father, *Let the dead*, ſays he, *bury their dead, but do thou follow me.*

There is *one thing needful*, and that is the buſineſs of Religion and the care of our immortal Souls, which whatever elſe we neglect ſhould be carefully minded and regarded by every one of us. *O that there were ſuch a heart in us. O that we were wiſe, that we underſtood this, that we would conſider our latter end:* Which God grant we may all do, *in this our day*; for his mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*, to whom with the *Father* and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXV.

Of the Eternity of Hell Torments.

Preached before the
QUEEN
AT
WHITEHALL,
March 7. 16$\frac{89}{90}$.

MATTH. XXV. 46.

And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the Righteous into life eternal.

AMong all the Arguments to Repentance and a good Life, thoſe have the greateſt force and power upon the minds of Men, which are fetch'd from another World; and from the final ſtate of good and bad men after this Life. And this our *Saviour* repreſents to us in a moſt lively manner, in that proſpect which, in the latter part of this *Chapter*, he gives us of the *Judgment* of the *great Day*, namely, that at the end of the World the *Son of Man ſhall come in his glory, with his Holy Angels, and ſhall ſit upon the Throne of his Glory; and all Nations ſhall be gathered before him*, and ſhall be ſeparated into two great Companies, the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*; who ſhall ſtand the one on the Right hand, and the other on the Left of this great Judge; who ſhall pronounce Sentence ſeverally upon them according to the actions which they have done in this Life: The Righteous ſhall be rewarded with eternal happineſs, and the Wicked ſhall be ſentenc'd to everlaſting puniſhment. *And theſe*, that is, *the Wicked*, *ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The *Words* are plain and need no explication. For I take it for granted, that every one, at firſt hearing of them, does clearly apprehend the difference between the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, and between endleſs Happineſs and Miſery: But although theſe *Words* be ſo very eaſie to be underſtood, they can never be too much conſider'd by us. The Scope and deſign of them is, to repreſent to us the different Fates of good and bad men in another World, and that their Ends *there*, will be as different, as their Ways and Doings have been *here* in this World: The ſerious conſideration whereof is the greateſt diſcouragement to Sin, and the moſt powerful argument in the World to a holy and vertuous Life: Becauſe it is an argument taken from our greateſt and moſt laſting intereſt, our happineſs or our miſery to all Eternity. A concernment of that vaſt conſequence, thar it muſt be the greateſt ſtupidity and folly in the World for any man to neglect it.

This eternal ſtate of Rewards and Puniſhments in another World, our *Bleſſed Saviour* hath clearly revealed to us. And as to one part of it, *viz.* That good men ſhall be eternally happy in another World, every one gladly admits it: But many are loth that the other part ſhould be true, concerning the eternal puniſhment of wicked men. And therefore they pretend that it is contrary to the Juſtice of God to puniſh temporary Crimes with eternal Torments: Becauſe Juſtice always obſerves a proportion between Offences and Puniſhments: but between temporary Sins and eternal Puniſhments there is no proportion. And as this ſeems hard to be reconcil'd with Juſtice, ſo much more with that exceſs of Goodneſs which we ſuppoſe to be in God.

And therefore they ſay, that though God ſeem to have declar'd that impenitent Sinners ſhall be everlaſtingly puniſh'd, yet theſe declarations of Scripture are ſo to be mollified and underſtood, as that we may be able to reconcile them with the eſſential perfections of the Divine Nature.

This is the full force and ſtrength of the Objection. And my work at this time ſhall be to clear, if I can, this difficult Point. And that for theſe two Reaſons. *Firſt*, For the vindication of the Divine Juſtice and Goodneſs: *That God may be juſtified in his ſayings, and* appear *Righteous when he judgeth.* And *Secondly*, becauſe the belief of the threatnings of God in their utmoſt extent is of ſo great moment to a good Life, and ſo great a diſcouragement to Sin: For the ſting of Sin is the terrour of eternal puniſhment; and if men were once ſet free from the fear and belief of this, the moſt powerful reſtraint from Sin would be taken away.

So that in Anſwer to this Objection, I ſhall endeavour to prove theſe two things.

Firſt, That the eternal puniſhment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture.

Secondly, That this is not inconſiſtent either with the Juſtice or the Goodneſs of God.

Firſt, That the eternal puniſhment of wicked men in another World is plainly threatned in Scripture, namely, in theſe following *Texts*, Matth. 18. 8. *It is better for thee to enter into Life halt and maimed, than having two hands or two feet to be caſt into everlaſting fire.* And *Matth.* 25. 41. *Depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And here in the *Text*, *theſe*, that is, *the wicked, ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment.* And *Mark* 9. it is there three ſeveral times with great vehemency repeated by our *Saviour*, *where their worm dyeth not, and the fire is not quenched.* And 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 9. ſpeaking of *them that know not God and obey not the Goſpel of his Son*, it is ſaid of them, *who ſhall be puniſh'd with everlaſting deſtruction.*

I know very well that great endeavour hath been us'd to avoid the force of theſe *Texts*, by ſhewing that the words, *for ever* and *everlaſting*, are frequently us'd in Scripture in a more limited ſenſe, only for a long duration and continuance. Thus, *for ever*, doth very often in the *Old Teſtament* only ſignifie for a long time and till the end of the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation. And in the *Epiſtle* of St. *Jude*, *verſe* 7th. The Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* are ſaid to be *ſet forth for an example, ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire*, that is, of a fire that was not extinguiſh'd till thoſe Cities were utterly conſum'd.

And therefore to clear the meaning of the forementioned *Texts*. *Firſt*, I ſhall readily grant, that the words, *for ever* and *everlaſting*, do not always in Scripture ſignifie an endleſs duration; and that this is ſufficiently proved by the inſtances alledg'd to this purpoſe. But then, *Secondly*, it cannot be denied on the other hand, that theſe words are often in Scripture uſed in a larger ſenſe and ſo as neceſſarily to ſignifie an interminable and endleſs duration. As where Eternity is attributed to God, and he is ſaid to *live for ever and ever*: And where eternal happineſs in another World is promiſed to good men, and that *they ſhall be for ever with the Lord*. Now the very ſame words and expreſſions are uſed concerning the puniſhment of wicked men in another life, and there is great reaſon why we ſhould underſtand them in the ſame extent: Both, becauſe if God had intended to have told us that the puniſhment of wicked men ſhall have no end, the Languages wherein the Scriptures are written do hardly afford fuller and more certain words, than thoſe that are uſed in this caſe, whereby to expreſs to us a duration without end: And likewiſe, which is almoſt a peremptory deciſion of the thing, becauſe the duration of the puniſhment of wicked men is in the very ſame ſentence expreſs'd by the very ſame word which is us'd for the duration of the happineſs of the righteous: As is evident from the *Text*, *Theſe*, ſpeaking of the wicked, *ſhall go away*, εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον, *into eternal puniſhment*, *but the righteous*, εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, *into life eternal*. I proceed to the

Second thing I propos'd; namely, to ſhew that this is not inconſiſtent either with the Juſtice or the Goodneſs of God. For in this the force of the Objection lies. And it hath been attempted to be anſwered ſeveral ways, none of which ſeems to me to give clear and full ſatisfaction to it.

Firſt, It is ſaid by ſome, that becauſe ſin is infinite in reſpect of the Object againſt whom it is committed, which is God, therefore it deſerves an infinite puniſhment.

But this I doubt will upon examination be found to have more of ſubtlety than of ſolidity in it. 'Tis true indeed, that the dignity of the Perſon againſt whom any offence is committed is a great aggravation of the fault. For which reaſon all offences againſt God are certainly the greateſt of all other. But that Crimes ſhould hereby be heighten'd to an infinite degree can by no means be admitted; and that for this plain reaſon; becauſe then the evil and demerit of all ſins muſt neceſſarily be equal; for the demerit of no ſin can be more than infinite: And if the demerit of all ſins be equal, there can then be no reaſon for the degrees of puniſhment in another World: But to deny that there are degrees of puniſhment there, is not only contrary to reaſon, but to our *Saviour*'s expreſs aſſertion, that ſome ſhall be *beaten with many ſtripes* and ſome with *fewer*, and that it ſhall be *more tolerable for ſome in the day of judgment* than for others. Beſides, that by the ſame reaſon that the leaſt ſin that is committed againſt God may be ſaid to be infinite becauſe of its object, the leaſt puniſhment that is inflicted by God may be ſaid to be infinite becauſe of its Author; and then all puniſhments from God as well as all ſins againſt him would be equal; which is palpably abſurd. So that this anſwer is by no means ſufficient to break the force of this Objection.

Secondly, It is ſaid by others, that if wicked men lived for ever in this World they would ſin for ever, and therefore they deſerve to be puniſh'd for ever. But this hath neither truth nor reaſon enough in it to give ſatisfaction. For who can certainly tell that if a man lived never ſo long he would never repent and grow better?

Beſides, that the Juſtice of God doth only puniſh the ſins which men have committed in this life, and not thoſe which they might poſſibly have committed if they had lived longer.

Thirdly, It is ſaid in the laſt place, that God hath ſet before men everlaſting Happineſs and Miſery, and the ſinner hath his choice. Here are two things ſaid which ſeem to bid fairly towards an anſwer.

Firſt, That the reward which God promiſeth to our obedience is equal to the puniſhment which he threatens to our diſobedience. But yet this I doubt will not reach the buſineſs: Becauſe though it be not contrary to Juſtice to exceed in Rewards, that being matter of meer favour; yet it may be ſo, to exceed in Puniſhments.

Secondly, It is further ſaid, that the ſinner in this caſe hath nothing to complain of, ſince he hath his own choice. This I confeſs is enough to ſilence the ſinner, and to make him to acknowledge that his deſtruction is of himſelf; but yet for all that, it does not ſeem ſo clearly to ſatisfie the objection from the diſproportion between the fault and the puniſhment.

And therefore I ſhall endeavour to clear, if it may be, this matter yet a little further by theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt, Let it be conſider'd, that the meaſure of Penalties with reſpect to Crimes is not only, nor always, to be taken from the quality and degree of the offence, much leſs from the duration and continuance of it, but from the ends and reaſons of Government; which require ſuch penalties as may, if it be poſſible, ſecure the obſervation of the Law, and deterr men from the breach of it. And the reaſon of this is evident, becauſe if it were once declar'd that no man ſhould ſuffer longer for any Crime than according to the proportion of the time in which it was committed, the conſequence of this would be that ſinners would be better husbands of their time and ſin ſo much the faſter, that they might have the greater bargain of it, and might ſatisfie for their ſins by a ſhorter puniſhment.

And it would be unreaſonable likewiſe upon another account; becauſe ſome of the greateſt ſins may perhaps be committed in the ſhorteſt time; for inſtance, *Murther*; the act whereof may be over in a moment, but the effects of it are perpetual. For he that kills a man once kills him for ever. The act of Murther may be committed in a trice, but the injury is endleſs and irreparable. So that this objection of temporary Crimes being puniſh'd with ſo much longer ſufferings is plainly of no force.

Beſides, that whoever conſiders how ineffectual the threatning even of eternal torments is to the greateſt part of ſinners, will ſoon be ſatisfy'd that a leſs penalty than that of eternal ſufferings would to the far greateſt part of mankind have been in all probability of little or no force. And therefore if any thing more terrible than eternal vengeance could have been threatned to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreaſonable, becauſe it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from ſin.

So that what proportion Crimes and Penalties ought to bear to each other, is not ſo properly a conſideration of Juſtice, as of Wiſdom and Prudence in the Lawgiver.

And the reaſon of this ſeems very plain, becauſe the meaſure of Penalties is not taken from any ſtrict proportion betwixt Crimes and Puniſhments; but from one great end and deſign of Government, which is to ſecure the obſervation of wholeſome and neceſſary Laws; and conſequently whatever Penalties are proper and neceſſary to this end are not unjuſt.

And this Conſideration I deſire may be more eſpecially obſerved, becauſe it ſtrikes at the very foundation of the objection. For if the appointing and apportioning of Penalties to Crimes be not ſo properly a conſideration of Juſtice, but rather of Prudence in the Lawgiver; then whatever the diſproportion may be between temporary Sins and eternal Sufferings, Juſtice cannot be ſaid to be concern'd in it.

Juſtice indeed is concern'd, that the Righteous and the Wicked ſhould not be treated alike; and farther yet, that greater Sins ſhould have a heavier puniſhment, and that *mighty ſinners ſhould be mightily tormented*; but all this may be conſider'd and adjuſted in the degree and the intenſneſs of the ſuffering, without making any difference in the duration of it.

The caſe then in ſhort ſtands thus. Whenever we break the Laws of God we fall into his hands and lye at his mercy, and he may without injuſtice inflict what puniſhment upon us he pleaſeth: And conſequently, to ſecure his Law from violation, he may beforehand threaten what penalties he thinks fit and neceſſary to deter men from the Tranſgreſſion of it. And this is not eſteemed unjuſt among men, to puniſh Crimes that are committed in an inſtant with the perpetual loſs of Eſtate, or Liberty, or Life.

Secondly, This will yet appear more reaſonable when we conſider, that after all he that threatens hath ſtill the power of execution in his own hands. For there is this remarkable difference between Promiſes and Threatnings, that he who promiſeth paſſeth over a right to another, and thereby ſtands obliged to him in Juſtice and Faithfulneſs to make good his promiſe; and if he do not, the party to whom the promiſe is made is not only diſappointed but injuriouſly dealt withal: But in threatnings it is quite otherwiſe. He that threatens keeps the right of puniſhing in his own hand and is not obliged to execute what he hath threatned any further than the reaſons and ends of Government do require: And he may without any injury to the party threatned remit and abate as much as he pleaſeth of the puniſhment that he hath threatned: And becauſe in ſo doing he is not worſe but better than his word, no body can find fault, or complain of any wrong or injuſtice thereby done to him.

Nor is this any impeachment of God's truth and faithfulneſs, any more than it is eſteem'd among men a piece of falſhood not to do what they have threatned. God did abſolutely threaten the deſtruction of the City of *Niniveh*, and his peeviſh *Prophet* did underſtand the threatning to be abſolute, and was very angry with God for employing him in a meſſage that was not made good. But God underſtood his own right, and did what he pleas'd notwithſtanding the threatning he had denounc'd, and for all *Jonah* was ſo touch'd in honour that he had rather have dy'd himſelf than that *Niniveh* ſhould not have been deſtroy'd, only to have verify'd his meſſage.

I know it is ſaid in this caſe, that God hath confirm'd theſe threatnings by an Oath, which is a certain ſign of the immutability of his counſel; and therefore his Truth is concern'd in the ſtrict and rigorous execution of them. The Land of *Canaan* was a Type of Heaven, and the *Iſraelites* who rebell'd in the Wilderneſs were alſo a Type of impenitent Sinners under the Goſpel; and conſequently the Oath of God concerning the rebellious *Iſraelites*, when he *ſware in his wrath that they ſhould not enter into his reſt*, that is, into the Land of *Canaan*, doth equally oblige Him to execute his threatning upon all impenitent Sinners under the Goſpel, that *they ſhall never enter into the Kingdom of God*. And this is very truly reaſon'd, ſo far as the threatning extends; which if we attend to the plain words of it, beyond which threatnings are never to be ſtretch'd, doth not ſeem to reach any further than to the excluſion of impenitent Sinners out of Heaven and their falling finally ſhort of the Reſt and Happineſs of the Righteous: Which however, directly overthrows the Opinion aſcrib'd to *Origen* that the Devils and wicked men ſhall all be ſaved at laſt; God having *ſworn in his wrath that they ſhall never enter into his reſt.*

But then, as to the eternal miſery and puniſhment threatned to wicked men in the other World, though it be not neceſſarily comprehended in this Oath that they *ſhall not enter into his Reſt:* yet we are to conſider, that both the tenour of the *Sentence* which our bleſſed *Saviour* hath aſſur'd us will be paſs'd upon them at the Judgment of the Great Day, *Depart ye curſed into everlaſting fire;* and likewiſe this Declaration in the Text, that *the Wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment,* though they do not reſtrain God from doing what he pleaſes, yet they cut off from the Sinner all reaſonable hopes of the relaxation or mitigation of them. For ſince the great Judge of the World hath made ſo plain and expreſs a Declaration, and will certainly paſs ſuch a Sentence, it would be the greateſt folly and madneſs in the world for the Sinner to entertain any hope of eſcaping it,and to venture his Soul upon that hope.

I know but one thing more, commonly ſaid upon this Argument, that ſeems material. And that is this, That the words *death* and *deſtruction* and *periſhing,* whereby the puniſhment of wicked men in the other World is moſt frequently expreſs'd in *Scripture,* do moſt properly import *annihilation* and an utter end of Being; and therefore may reaſonably be ſo underſtood in the matter of which we are now ſpeaking.

To this I anſwer, that theſe words, and thoſe which anſwer them in other Languages, are often, both in *Scripture* and other *Authors,* uſed to ſignifie a ſtate of great miſery and ſuffering, without the utter extinction of the miſerable. Thus God is often in *Scripture* ſaid to bring *deſtruction* upon a Nation when he ſends great Judgments upon them, though they do not exterminate and make an utter end of them.

And nothing is more common in moſt Languages, than by *periſhing* to expreſs a perſon's being undone and made very miſerable. As in that known paſſage in *Tiberius* his Letter to the *Roman* Senate, * *Let all the Gods and Goddeſſes,* ſaith he, deſtroy *me worſe than at this very time I feel my ſelf to* periſh, &c. in which Saying, the words, *deſtroy* and *periſh,* are both of them us'd to expreſs the miſerable anguiſh and torment which at that time he felt in his mind, as *Tacitus* tells us at large.

* *Ita me Dij Deæq; omnes pejus perdant quam hodie perire me ſentio,* &c.

And as for the word *Death;* a ſtate of miſery which is as bad or worſe than death may properly enough be call'd by that name: And for this reaſon the puniſhment of wicked men after the Day of Judgment is in the Book of the *Revelation* ſo frequently and fitly call'd *the ſecond death.* And *the Lake of fire,* into which the wicked *ſhall be caſt* to be tormented in it, is expreſly call'd *the ſecond death.*

Rev.20.14.

But beſides this, they that argue from the force of theſe words, that the puniſhment of wicked men in the other World ſhall be nothing elſe but an utter end of their Being, do neceſſarily fall into two great inconveniencies.

Firſt, That hereby they exclude all poſitive puniſhment and torment of Sinners. For if *the ſecond death,* and to be *deſtroy'd,* and to *periſh,* ſignifie nothing elſe but the *Annihilation* of Sinners and an utter extinction of their Being; and if this be all the effect of that dreadful *Sentence* which ſhall be paſs'd upon them at the *Day of Judgment,* then the *Fire of Hell* is quench'd all at once, and is only a frightful *Metaphor* without any meaning. But this is directly contrary to the tenour of *Scripture,* which doth ſo often deſcribe the puniſhment of wicked men in Hell by poſitive torments: And particularly

larly our Bleſſed *Saviour*, deſcribing the lamentable ſtate of the damned in Hell, expreſly ſays that *there ſhall be weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of teeth*; which cannot be, if Annihilation be all the meaning and effect of the Sentence of the Great Day.

Secondly, Another inconvenience of this Opinion is, that if *Annihilation* be all the puniſhment of Sinners in the other World, then the puniſhment of all Sinners muſt of neceſſity be equal, becauſe there are no degrees of *Annihilation* or *not-being*. But this alſo is moſt directly contrary to *Scripture*, as I have already ſhewn.

I know very well that ſome who are of this Opinion do allow a very long and tedious time of the moſt terrible and intolerable torment of Sinners, and after that they believe that there ſhall be an utter end of their Being.

But then they muſt not argue this from the force of the Words before mentioned, becauſe the plain inference from thence is, that Annihilation is all the puniſhment that wicked men ſhall undergo in the next life; And if that be not true, as I have plainly ſhewn that it is not, I do not ſee from what other words or expreſſions in *Scripture* they can find the leaſt ground for this Opinion, that the torment of wicked men ſhall at laſt end in their *Annihilation*. And yet admitting all this, for which I think there is no ground at all in *Scripture*, I cannot ſee what great comfort Sinners can take in the thought of a tedious time of terrible torment, ending at laſt in *Annihilation* and the utter extinction of their Beings.

Thirdly, We may conſider further, that the primary end of all Threatnings is not puniſhment, but the prevention of it. For God does not threaten that men may ſin and be puniſh'd, but that they may not ſin, and ſo may eſcape the puniſhment threaten'd. And therefore the higher the threatning runs, ſo much the more mercy and goodneſs there is in it; becauſe it is ſo much the more likely to hinder men from incurring the penalty that is threatned.

Fourthly, Let it be conſider'd likewiſe, that when it is ſo very plain that God hath threatned eternal miſery to impenitent Sinners, all the prudence in the World obliges men to believe that he is in good earneſt, and will execute theſe threatnings upon them, if they will obſtinately ſtand it out with him, and will not be brought to Repentance. And therefore in all reaſon we ought ſo to demean our ſelves, and ſo to perſwade others, as knowing the terrour of the Lord, and that they who wilfully break his Laws are in danger of eternal Death. To which I will add in the

Fifth and laſt place, That if we ſuppoſe that God did intend that his threatnings ſhould have their effect to deter men from the breach of his Laws, it cannot be imagin'd that in the ſame Revelation which declares theſe Threatnings any intimation ſhould be given of the abatement or non-execution of them. For by this God would have weaken'd his own Laws, and have taken off the edge and terrour of his Threatnings: Becauſe a Threatning hath quite loſt its force, if we once come to believe that it will not be executed: And conſequently, it would be a very impious deſign to go about to teach or perſwade any thing to the contrary, and a betraying men into that miſery which had it been firmly believ'd might have been avoided.

We are all bound to preach, and you and I are all bound to believe the terrors of the Lord. Not ſo, as ſawcily to determine and pronounce what God muſt do in this caſe; for after all, He may do what he will, as I have clearly ſhewn: But what is fit for us to do, and what we have reaſon to expect, if notwithſtanding a plain and expreſs threatning of *the vengeance of eternal fire*, we ſtill go on to *treaſure up to our ſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*; and will deſperately put it to the hazard, whether, and how far God will execute his threatnings upon Sinners in another World.

And therefore there is no need why we ſhould be very ſollicitouſly concern'd for the honour of God's Juſtice or Goodneſs in this matter. Let us but take care to believe and avoid the Threatnings of God; and then, how terrible ſoever they are, no harm can come to us. And as for God, let us not doubt but that he will take care of his own Honour; and that He, *who is holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works*, will do nothing that is repugnant to his eternal Goodneſs and Righteouſneſs; and that he will certainly ſo manage things at the Judgment of the Great Day, as *to be juſtified in his ſayings, and to be righteous when we are judged.* For notwithſtanding his Threatnings, he hath reſerved Power enough in his own hands to do right to all his Perfections: So that we may reſt aſſur'd, that he will *judge the world in righteouſneſs*; and if it be any-wiſe inconſiſtent either with Righteouſneſs or Goodneſs, which He knows much better than we do, to make Sinners miſerable for ever, that He will not do it; nor is it credible, that he would threaten Sinners with a Puniſhment which he could not juſtly execute upon them.

Therefore Sinners ought always to be afraid of it, and reckon upon it: And always to remember, that there is great Goodneſs and Mercy in the ſeverity of God's Threatnings; and that nothing will more juſtifie the infliction of eternal Torments, than the fooliſh preſumption of Sinners in venturing upon them, notwithſtanding ſuch plain and terrible Threatnings.

This, I am ſure, is a good Argument to all of us, to *work out our Salvation with fear and trembling*; and with all poſſible care to endeavour the prevention of that miſery which is ſo terribly ſevere, that at preſent we can hardly tell how to reconcile it with the Juſtice and Goodneſs of God.

This God heartily deſires we would do; and hath ſolemnly ſworn, that *he hath no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live.* So that here is all imaginable care taken to prevent our miſcarriage, and all the aſſurance that the God of Truth can give us of his unwillingneſs to bring this miſery upon us. And both theſe, I am ſure, are Arguments of great Goodneſs. For what can Goodneſs do more, than to warn us of this miſery, and earneſtly to perſwade us to prevent it; and to threaten us ſo very terribly, on purpoſe to deter us from ſo great a danger?

And if this will not prevail with us, but we will ſtill go on to *deſpiſe the riches of God's goodneſs, and long ſuffering, and forbearance*; what in reaſon remains for us, *but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation to conſume us?* And what almoſt can Juſtice, or even Goodneſs it ſelf do leſs, than to inflict that puniſhment upon us, which with eyes open we would wilfully run upon; and which no warning, no perſwaſion, no importunity could prevail with us to avoid? And when, as the *Apoſtle* ſays, *knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit ſuch things are worthy of death*; yet for all that, we would venture to commit them.

And therefore, whatever we ſuffer, we do but inherit our own choice, and have no reaſon to complain of God, who hath ſet before us Life and Death, eternal Happineſs and Miſery, and hath left us to be the Carvers of our own Fortune: And if, after all this, we will obſtinately refuſe this happineſs, and wilfully run upon this Miſery, *Wo unto us! for we have rewarded evil to our ſelves.*

You ſee then, by all that hath been ſaid upon this Argument, what we have all reaſon to expect, if we will ſtill go on in our Sins, and will not be brought to Repentance. You have heard, what a terrible Puniſhment the juſt God hath threatned to the Workers of Iniquity: and that in as plain words as can be uſed to expreſs any thing. *Theſe*, that is, *the wicked, ſhall go away into everlaſting Puniſhment, but the righteous into Life eternal.*

Here are *Life* and *Death*, Happineſs and Miſery ſet before us. Not this frail and mortal Life, which is hardly worth the having, were it not in order to a better and happier Life; nor a temporal Death, to get above the dread whereof ſhould not methinks be difficult to us, were it not for the bitter and terrible conſequences of it: But an eternal Life, and an eternal enjoyment of all things which can render Life pleaſant and happy; and a perpetual Death, which will for ever torment us, but never make an end of us.

Theſe God propounds to our choice: And if the conſideration of them will not prevail with us to leave our ſins, and to reform our lives, what will? Weightier Motives cannot be propos'd to the underſtanding of Man, than *everlaſting Puniſhment*, and *Life eternal*; than the greateſt and moſt durable happineſs, and the moſt intolerable and laſting miſery that human Nature is capable of.

Now, conſidering in what terms the Threatnings of the Goſpel are expreſs'd, we have all the reaſon in the World to believe that the Puniſhment of Sinners in another World will be everlaſting. However, we cannot be certain of the contrary, time enough to prevent it; not till we come there, and find it by experience how it is: And if it prove ſo, it will then be too late either to prevent that terrible Doom, or to get it revers'd.

Some comfort themſelves with the uncomfortable and uncertain hope of being diſcharg'd out of Being, and reduc'd to their firſt Nothing; at leaſt after the tedious and terrible ſuffering of the moſt grievous and exquiſite Torments for innumerable Ages. And if this ſhould happen to be true, good God! how feeble, how cold a comfort is this? Where is the Reaſon and Underſtanding of Men, to make this their laſt Refuge and Hope; and to lean upon it as a matter of mighty conſolation, that they ſhall be miſerable beyond all imagination, and beyond all patience, for God knows how many Ages? *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?* No right ſenſe and judgment of things? No conſideration and care of themſelves, no concernment for their own laſting Intereſt and Happineſs?

Origen, I know not for what good reaſon, is ſaid to have been of opinion, That the puniſhment of Devils and wicked men, after the Day of Judgment, will continue but for a thouſand years; and that after *that* time, they ſhall all be finally ſaved. I can very hardly perſwade my ſelf, that ſo wiſe and learned a man as *Origen* was, ſhould be poſitive in an Opinion for which there can be no certain ground in Reaſon, eſpecially for the punctual and preciſe term of a thouſand years; and for which there is no ground at all, that I know of, from Divine Revelation.

But upon the whole matter, however it be; be it for a thouſand years, or be it for a longer and unknown term, or be it for ever, which is plainly threatned in the Goſpel: I ſay, however it be, this is certain, that it is infinitely wiſer to take care to avoid it, than to diſpute it, and to run the final hazard of it. Put it which way we will, eſpecially if we put it at the worſt, as in all prudence we ought to do, it is by all poſſible means to be provided againſt: So terrible, ſo intolerable is the thought, yea the very leaſt ſuſpicion of being miſerable for ever.

And now give me leave to ask you, as St. *Paul* did King *Agrippa*, *Do you believe the Scriptures?* And I hope I may anſwer for you my ſelf as he did for *Agrippa*, *I know you do believe them.* And in them theſe things are clearly revealed,

vealed, and are part of that *Creed* of which we make a ſolemn profeſſion every day.

And yet when we conſider how moſt men live, is it credible that they do firmly believe this plain Declaration of our *Saviour* and our *Judge*, That *the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting Puniſhment, but the righteous into Life eternal?*

Or if they do in ſome ſort believe it, is it credible that they do at all conſider it ſeriouſly, and lay it to heart? So that if we have a mind to reconcile our belief with our Actions, we muſt either alter our *Bible* and our *Creed*, or we muſt change our Lives.

Let us then *conſider, and ſhew our ſelves men.* And if we do ſo, can any man to pleaſe himſelf for a little while be contented to be puniſhed for ever; and for the ſhadow of a ſhort and imperfect happineſs in this life, be willing to run the hazard of being really and eternally miſerable in the next World?

Surely this conſideration alone, of the extreme and endleſs miſery of impenitent Sinners in another World, if it were but well wrought into our minds, would be ſufficient to kill all the temptations of this World, and to lay them dead at our feet; and to make us deaf to all the Enchantments of Sin and Vice: Becauſe they bid us ſo infinitely to our loſs, when they offer us the enjoyment of a ſhort Pleaſure, upon ſo very hard and unequal a condition as that of being miſerable for ever.

The eternal Rewards and Puniſhments of another Life, which are the great Sanction and Security of God's Laws, one would think ſhould be a ſufficient weight to caſt the Scales againſt any Pleaſure, or any Pain, that this World can tempt, or can threaten us withal.

And yet, after all this, will we ſtill go on to do wickedly; when *we know the terrors of the Lord*, and that we muſt one day anſwer all our bold violations of his Law, and contempts of his Authority, with the loſs of our immortal Souls, and by *ſuffering the vengeance of eternal fire?*

What is it then that can give men the *Heart* and *Courage*; but I recal that Word, becauſe it is not true *Courage*, but *fool hardineſs*, thus to outbrave the Judgment of God, and to ſet at nought the horrible and amazing conſideration of a miſerable Eternity? How is it poſſible that men that are awake, and in their wits, ſhould have any eaſe in their minds, or enjoy ſo much as one quiet hour, whilſt ſo great a danger hangs over their heads, and they have taken no tolerable care to prevent it? If we have any true and juſt ſenſe of this danger, we cannot fail to ſhew that we have it, by making haſte to eſcape it, and by taking that care of our Souls, which is due to immortal Spirits that are made to be Happy or Miſerable to all Eternity.

Let us not therefore eſtimate and meaſure things as they appear now to our ſenſual and deluded and deprav'd Judgments; but let us open our eyes, and look to the laſt iſſue and conſequence of them: Let us often think of theſe things, and conſider well with our ſelves, what apprehenſions will then probably fill and poſſeſs our minds, when we ſhall ſtand trembling before our *Judge*, in a fearful expectation of that terrible *Sentence* which is juſt ready to be pronounced, and as ſoon as ever it is pronounced to be executed upon us: When we ſhall have a full and clear ſight of the unſpeakable Happineſs, and of the horrible and aſtoniſhing Miſeries of another World: When there ſhall be no longer any Veil of Fleſh and Senſe to interpoſe between them and us, and to hide theſe things from our eyes: And, in a word, when Heaven with all the Glories of it, ſhall be open to our view; and, as the expreſſion is in *Job, Hell ſhall be naked before us, and Deſtruction ſhall have no covering.*

How ſhall we then be confounded, to find the truth and reality of thoſe things which we will not now be perſwaded to believe? And how ſhall we then wiſh, that we had believed *the terrors of the Lord*; and inſtead of quarrelling with the Principles of Religion, and calling them into queſtion, we had lived under the conſtant ſenſe and awe of them?

Bleſſed be God, that there is yet *hope concerning us*, and that we may yet *flee from the wrath to come*; and that the Miſeries of Eternity may yet be prevented in Time: And that for this very end and purpoſe, our moſt Gracious and Merciful God hath ſo clearly revealed theſe things to us, not with a deſire to bring them upon us, but that we being warned by his Threatnings, might not bring them upon our ſelves.

I will conclude all with the Counſel of the *Wiſe Man*; *Seek not Death in the error of your Life, and pull not upon your ſelves the deſtruction with the works of your own hands. For God made not death, neither hath he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the Living: But ungodly men with their works and words have called it down upon themſelves.* Which that none of us may do, God of his infinite Goodneſs grant, for his Mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*: To whom, with Thee, *O Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

Wiſdom of Solomon, ch. 1. ver. 12, 13, 16.

This ſermon excited no ſmall clamor against Tillotson: but it has been ably defended by Le Clerc. It has been ſaid, that his opinions on this ſubject agree with those of Episcopius: & that ſome parts of the ſermon are almost a literal translation from the celebrated Arminian.

SERMON

SERMON XXXVI.

Succeſs not always anſwerable to the probability of Second Cauſes.

BEING

A FAST-SERMON

Preached before the

House of Commons,

ON

Wedneſday, April *the* 16th. 1690.

ECCLESIASTES IX. 11.

I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong, nor yet bread to the wiſe, nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, nor yet favour to men of ſkill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Next to the acknowledgment of God's Being, nothing is more eſſential to Religion, than the Belief of his Providence, and a conſtant dependance upon him, as the great Governour of the World, and the wiſe Diſpoſer of all the Affairs and Concernments of the Children of Men: And nothing can be a greater Argument of Providence, than that there is ſuch an order of Cauſes laid in Nature, that in ordinary courſe every thing does uſually attain its end; and yet that there is ſuch a mixture of Contingency, as that now and then, we cannot tell how nor why, the moſt likely cauſes do deceive us, and fail of producing their uſual effects.

For if there be a God and a Providence, it is reaſonable that things ſhould be thus: Becauſe a Providence does ſuppoſe all things to have been at firſt wiſely fram'd, and with a fitneſs to attain their end; but yet it does alſo ſuppoſe that God hath reſerv'd to himſelf a power and liberty to interpoſe, and to croſs as he pleaſes, the uſual courſe of things; to awaken men to the conſideration of him, and a continual dependance upon him; and to teach us to aſcribe thoſe things to his wiſe diſpoſal, which, if we never ſaw any change, we ſhould be apt to impute to blind neceſſity. And therefore the *Wiſe-man*, to bring us to an acknowledgment of the Divine Providence, tells us that thus he had obſerved things to be in this World; that though they generally happen according to the probability of Second Cauſes, yet ſometimes they fall out quite otherwiſe, *I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong*, &c.

The connexion of which Words, with the foregoing Diſcourſe, is briefly this. Among many other Obſervations which the *Wiſe Preacher* makes in this *Sermon* of the vanity and uncertainty of all things in this World, and of the miſtakes of men about them, he takes notice here in the *Text*, and in the *Verſe* before it, of two Extremes of humane Life: Some, becauſe of the uncertainty of all worldly things, caſt off all care and diligence, and neglect the uſe of proper and probable means, having found by experience, that when men have done all they can, they many times fail of their end, and are diſappointed they know not how: Others, on the contrary, rely ſo much upon their own skill and induſtry, as to promiſe ſucceſs to themſelves in all their undertakings; and preſume ſo much upon ſecond Cauſes, as if no conſideration at all were to be had of the Firſt.

The *Wiſe Preacher* reproves both theſe extremes, and ſhews the folly and vanity of them. On the one hand, of thoſe who ſit ſtill, and will uſe no care and endeavour, becauſe it may all happen to be diſappointed, and to fail of Succeſs: Not conſidering, that though prudent care and diligence will not always do the buſineſs, yet there is nothing to be done without them, in the ordinary courſe of things; and that, in the order of Second Cauſes, theſe are the moſt likely and effectual means to any end: And therefore, rejecting this lazy Principle, he counſels men, whatever they propoſe to themſelves, to be very diligent and vigorous in the uſe of proper means for the attainment of it; in the *Verſe* immediately before the *Text*, *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.*

But then he obſerves alſo, as great a folly and vanity on the other hand; that they who manage their affairs with great wiſdom and induſtry, are apt to preſume and reckon upon the certain ſucceſs of them, without taking into conſideration that which in all human affairs is moſt conſiderable, the favour and bleſſing of that Almighty and Wiſe Providence which rules the World; *I returned*, ſays he, *and ſaw under the ſun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong*, &c.

I returned and ſaw, that is, having conſider'd on the one hand the folly of ſloth and careleſneſs, I turned mine eyes the other way, and ſaw as great an error on the other hand; in mens preſuming too much upon their own diligence and conduct, without taking notice of the Providence of God. For I have found, ſays *Solomon*, by manifold obſervation, That the ſucceſs of things does not always anſwer the probability of ſecond cauſes and means. So that the ſum of the *Preacher*'s advice is this: When thou propoundeſt any end to thy ſelf, be diligent and vigorous in the uſe of means; and when thou haſt done all, look above and beyond theſe to a Superiour Cauſe which over-rules, and ſteers, and ſtops as he pleaſes, all the motions and activity of ſecond Cauſes: And be not confident that all things are ever ſo wiſely and firmly laid, that they cannot fail of ſucceſs. For the Providence of God doth many times ſtep in to divert the moſt probable event of things, and to turn it quite another way: And whenever he pleaſeth to do ſo, the moſt ſtrong and likely means do fall lame, or ſtumble, or by ſome accident or other come ſhort of their end.

I returned, and ſaw under the ſun, that is, here below, in this inferiour World.

That the race is not to the ſwift: This the *Chaldee Paraphraſt* does underſtand with relation to warlike affairs, *I beheld*, ſays he, *and ſaw, that they who are ſwift as eagles do not always eſcape in the day of battel.* But I chuſe rather to underſtand the Words in their more obvious ſenſe, that in a Race many things may happen to hinder him that is ſwifteſt from winning it.

Nor the battel to the ſtrong; That is, Victory and Succeſs in War do not always attend the greateſt force and preparations, nor doth that ſide which in human eſtimation is ſtrongeſt always prevail and get the better.

Nor yet bread to the wiſe; Neque doctorum panem eſſe, ſo ſome render the Words, that learned men are not always ſecured againſt Poverty and Want.

Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding, for ſo ſome *Interpreters* tranſlate the Words, *Neque induſtriis divitias eſſe*, that thoſe who take moſt pains do not always get the greateſt Eſtates.

Nor yet favour to men of skill; that is, to thoſe who underſtand men and buſineſs, and how to apply themſelves dextrouſly to the inclinations and intereſts of Princes and Great men. Others interpret theſe Words more generally, *Neque peritorum artificum eſſe gratiam*, that thoſe who excel moſt in their ſeveral Arts and Profeſſions do not always meet with ſuitable encouragement: But becauſe the Word, which is here render'd *favour*, is ſo frequently us'd by *Solomon* for the favour of Princes, the former ſenſe ſeems to be more eaſie and natural.

But time and chance happeneth to them all; that is, ſaith *Aben Ezra*, there is a ſecret Providence of God which ſometimes preſents men with unexpected opportunities, and interpoſeth accidents which no human wiſdom could foreſee: Which gives ſucceſs to very unlikely means; and defeats the ſwift, and the ſtrong, and the learned, and the induſtrious, and them that are beſt vers'd in men and buſineſs, of their ſeveral ends and deſigns.

It ſometimes happens, that he that is *ſwifteſt*, by a fall, or by fainting, or by ſome other unlucky accident may loſe the Race.

It ſometimes falls out, that a much ſmaller and weaker number, by the advantage of ground, or of a paſs; by a ſtratagem, or by a ſudden ſurpriſe, or by ſome other accident and opportunity, may be victorious over a much greater force.

And that an unlearned man, in compariſon, by favour, or friends, or by ſome happy chance of ſetting out to the beſt advantage the little learning he has, before one that hath leſs, may arrive at great things; when perhaps at the ſame time, the man that is a hundred times more learned than he, may be ready to ſtarve.

And that men of no great parts and induſtry may ſtumble into an eſtate, and by ſome caſual hit in Trade, may attain ſuch a Fortune, as the man that hath toil'd and drudg'd all his life ſhall never be able to reach.

And *Laſtly*, that a man of no great ambition or deſign may fall into an opportunity, and by happening upon the *mollia tempora fandi*, ſome ſoft and lucky ſeaſon of addreſs, may ſlide into his Prince's favour, and all on the ſudden be hoiſted up to that degree of dignity and eſteem, as the deſigning Man who hath been laying Trains to blow up his Rivals, and waiting opportunities all his days to worm others out, and to ſkrew himſelf in, ſhall never be able to attain.

The words thus explain'd contain this general Propoſition, which ſhall be the ſubject of my following Diſcourſe.

That in humane affairs the moſt likely means do not always attain their end, nor does the event conſtantly anſwer the probability of ſecond cauſes; but there is a ſecret Providence which governs and over-rules all things, and does, when it pleaſes, interpoſe to defeat the moſt hopeful and probable deſigns.

In the handling of this Propoſition I ſhall do theſe three things.

Firſt, I ſhall confirm and illuſtrate the truth of it, by an Induction of the Particulars which are inſtanc'd in, here in the *Text*.

Secondly, I ſhall give ſome reaſon and account of this, why the Providence of God doth ſometimes interpoſe to hinder and defeat the moſt probable deſigns.

Thirdly, I ſhall draw ſome Inferences from the whole, ſuitable to the occaſion of this Day. In all which I ſhall endeavour to be as brief as conveniently I can.

Firſt, For the confirmation and illuſtration of this Propoſition, *That the moſt likely means do not always attain their end; but there is a ſecret Providence which over-rules and governs all events, and does, when it pleaſes, interpoſe to defeat the moſt probable and hopeful deſigns.* This is the general Concluſion which *Solomon* proves by this Induction of Particulars in the *Text*. And he inſtanceth in the moſt probable means for the compaſſing of the ſeveral ends which moſt men in this World propoſe to themſelves. And the great darlings of mankind are *Victory*, *Riches*, and *Honour*: I do not mention *Pleaſure*, becauſe that ſeems rather to reſult from the uſe and enjoyment of the other. Now if a man deſign *Victory*, what more probable means to overcome in a Race than ſwiftneſs? What more likely to prevail in War than ſtrength? If a man aim at Riches, what more proper to raiſe an Eſtate than underſtanding and induſtry? If a man aſpire to Honour, what more likely to prefer him to the King's favour and ſervice than dexterity and skill in buſineſs? And yet experience ſhews that theſe means, as probable as they ſeem to be, are not always ſucceſsful for the accompliſhment of their ſeveral ends.

Or elſe we may ſuppoſe that *Solomon* by theſe Inſtances did intend to repreſent the chief engines and inſtruments of humane deſigns and actions. Now there are *five* things more eſpecially, which do eminently qualifie a man for any undertaking; expedition and quickneſs of diſpatch; ſtrength and force; providence and forecaſt; diligence and induſtry; knowledge, and inſight into men and buſineſs: And ſome think that *Solomon* did intend to repreſent theſe ſeveral qualities by the ſeveral inſtances in the *Text*. *The Race is not to the ſwift*, that is, men of the greateſt expedition and diſpatch do not always ſucceed: For we ſee that men do ſometimes out-run buſineſs, and make haſte to be undone. *Nor the battel to the ſtrong*, that is, neither does force and ſtrength always carry it. *Nor yet bread to the wiſe*; which ſome underſtand of the provident care and pains of the Husbandman, whoſe harveſt is not always anſwerable to his labour and hopes. *Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding*, or induſtry; that is, neither is diligence in buſineſs always crown'd with ſucceſs. *Nor yet favour to men of skill*, that is, neither have they that have the greateſt dexterity in the management of affairs always the fortune to riſe. And if we take the words in this ſenſe, the thing will come much to one: But I rather approve the firſt interpretation, as being leſs forc'd and nearer to the *Letter*.

So that the force of *Solomon*'s reaſoning is this, If the ſwifteſt do not always win the race; nor the ſtrongeſt always overcome in War: If knowledge and learning do not always ſecure men from want; nor induſtry always make men rich; nor political skill always raiſe men to high place; nor any other means, that can be inſtanced in as moſt probable, do conſtantly and infallibly ſucceed: then it muſt be acknowledg'd that there is ſome other Cauſe which mingles it ſelf with humane affairs and governs all events; and which can, and does when it pleaſes, defeat the moſt likely, and bring to paſs the moſt improbable deſigns: And what elſe can that be imagin'd to be, but the ſecret and over-ruling Providence of Almighty God? when we can find no other, we are very unreaſonable if we will not admit this to be the Cauſe of ſuch extraordinary events, but will obſtinately impute that to blind Neceſſity or Chance which hath ſuch plain Characters upon it of a Divine Power and Wiſdom.

I might be large upon every one of theſe Inſtances in the *Text*, and illuſtrate them by pat and lively Examples both out of Scripture and other Hiſtories. But I ſhall briefly paſs over all of them, but the *ſecond*, *The battel is not to the ſtrong*.

The race is not to the ſwift. If we underſtand this litterally, it is obvious to every man to imagine a great many accidents in a Race, which may ſnatch Victory from the ſwifteſt runner. If we underſtand it, as the *Chaldee Paraphraſe* does, with relation to War, that the ſwifteſt does not always overcome or eſcape in the day of Battel; of this *Aſahel* is an eminent Inſtance who though he was, as the Scripture tells us, *light of foot as a wild Roe*, yet did he not eſcape the Spear of *Abner*. It ſeems that among the *Ancients*, ſwiftneſs was look'd upon as a great qualification in a Warriour, both becauſe it ſerves for a ſudden aſſault and onſet, and likewiſe for that which in civility we call a nimble retreat. And therefore *David*, in his Poetical *Lamentation* over thoſe two great Captains, *Saul* and *Jonathan*, takes particular notice of this warlike quality of theirs; *They were*, ſays he, *ſwifter than Eagles, ſtronger than Lyons:* And the conſtant Character which *Homer* gives of *Achilles*, one of his principal *Heroes*, is, that *he was ſwift of foot:* The *Poet* feigns of him, that by ſome charm or gift of the Gods he was invulnerable in all parts of his Body except his heel: And *that* was the part to which he truſted; and in *that* he received his mortal wound: The wiſe Poet hereby inſtructing us, that many times our greateſt danger lyes there, where we place our chief confidence and ſafety.

Nor yet bread to the wiſe, or to the learned. The poverty of *Poets* is Proverbial; and there are frequent inſtances in Hiſtory of eminently learned perſons that have been reduced to great ſtraits and neceſſities.

Nor yet riches to men of underſtanding: By which, whether we underſtand men of great parts, or of great diligence and induſtry; it is obvious to every man's obſervation, that an ordinary capacity and underſtanding does uſually lye more level to the buſineſs of a common Trade and Profeſſion, than more refin'd and elevated parts; which lye rather for ſpeculation than practice, and are better fitted for the pleaſure and ornament of converſation, than for the toil and drudgery of buſineſs: As a fine Razor is admirable for cutting hairs, but the dull Hatchet much more proper for hewing a hard and knotty piece of timber. And even when Parts and Induſtry meet together, they are many times leſs ſucceſsful in the raiſing of a great Eſtate, than men of much lower and ſlower underſtandings: becauſe theſe are apt to admire riches, which is a great ſpur to induſtry; and becauſe they are perpetually intent upon one thing, and mind but one buſineſs, from which their thoughts never ſtraggle into vain and uſeleſs enquiries after knowledge, or news, or publick affairs; all which being foreign to their buſineſs they leave to thoſe who are, as they are wont to ſay of them in ſcorn, more curious, and too wiſe to be rich.

Nor yet favour to men of skill. All Hiſtory is full of Inſtances of the caſual advancement of men to great favour and honour, when others, who have made it their ſerious ſtudy and buſineſs, have fallen ſhort of it. I could give a famous example in this kind, of the manifold and manifeſt diſappointment of a whole *Order* of men: the ſlyeſt and moſt ſubtile, *in their generation, of all the children of this World*; the moſt politically inſtituted, and the beſt ſtudied and skill'd in the tempers and intereſts of men; the moſt pragmatical, and cunning to inſinuate themſelves into the Intrigues of Courts and great Families: and who, by long experience, and an univerſal intelligence, and communicated obſervations, have reduced humane affairs, at leaſt as they think, to a certain Art and Method, and to the moſt ſteddy Rules that ſuch contingent things are capable of: I believe you all gueſs before-hand whom I mean, even the *honeſt Jeſuits*: And yet theſe men of ſo much Art and Skill have met with as many checks and diſappointments, as any ſort of men ever did: They have been diſcountenanc'd by almoſt all Princes and States, and, one time or other, baniſh'd out of moſt of the Courts and Countries of *Europe*. And it is no ſmall argument of the Divine Providence, that ſo much cunning hath met with ſo little countenance and ſucceſs; and hath been ſo often, ſo groſly infatuated, and their *counſels turn'd into fooliſhneſs*.

But I promis'd only to mention theſe, and to inſiſt upon the ſecond Inſtance in the *Text*, *I return'd, and ſaw under the ſun, that the battel is not to the ſtrong*, to the *Gibborim*, the *Gyants*, for ſo the *Hebrew* word ſignifies; in which *Solomon* might poſſibly have reſpect to the Hiſtory of the *Iſraelites* ſubduing the *Canaanites*, a People of great ſtrength and ſtature, among whom were the *Gyants*, *the ſons of Anak*: or more probably, to the famous encounter of his Father *David* with the great *Goliah*: But however that be, the *Scripture* is full of Examples to this purpoſe; that when the Providence of God is pleas'd to interpoſe in favour of any ſide, it becomes victorious; according to the ſaying of King *Aſa* in his Prayer to God, *it is nothing with thee to help,* 2 Chron.
whether with many, or with thoſe that have no power. 14.11.

Sometimes God hath defeated great Armies by plain and apparent Miracles: Such was the drowning of *Pharaoh* and his Hoſt in the *Red Sea*; and the *Stars* fighting in their courſes againſt *Siſera*; by which Poetical expreſſion I ſuppoſe is meant *Siſera*'s being remarkably defeated by a viſible hand from Heaven: And ſuch was the deſtruction of the proud King of *Aſſyria*'s Army by an *Angel*, who ſlew an hundred and fourſcore and five thouſand of them in one night.

Sometimes God does this by more humane ways; by ſtriking mighty Armies with a *Panick* and unaccountable fear; and ſometimes by putting extraordinary ſpirits and courage into the weaker ſide, ſo that *an hundred ſhall chaſe a thouſand, and a thouſand ſhall put ten thouſand to flight.*

This made *David* ſo frequently to acknowledge the Providence of God, eſpecially in the affairs of War. *There is no King ſaved by the multitude of an* Pſ. 33. 16.
Hoſt, neither is a mighty man delivered by much ſtrength. And again, *I will not* Pſ. 44. 6.
truſt in my bow, neither ſhall my ſword ſave me. And *Solomon* confirms the ſame obſervation, *There is no wiſdom*, ſays he, *nor underſtanding, nor counſel* Prov. 21.
againſt the Lord. The horſe is prepared againſt the day of battel, but ſafety, 30,31.
or, as ſome *Tranſlations* render it, *Victory, is of the Lord. Gideon*, by a very odd ſtratagem of *Lamps* and *Pitchers*, defeated a very numerous Army, only with three hundred men. *Jonathan* and his *Armour-bearer*, by climbing up a Rock, and coming ſuddenly on the back of the *Philiſtines* Camp, ſtruck them with ſuch a terror as put their whole Army to flight. King *Aſa*, with a much inferiour number, defeated that huge *Ethiopian* Army which conſiſted

of a *Million.* And how was *Xerxes* his mighty Army overthrown, almoſt by a handful of *Grecians*? And, to come nearer our ſelves, how was that formidable Fleet of the *Spaniards*, which they preſumptuouſly called *invincible,* ſhatter'd and broken in pieces, chiefly by the Winds and the Sea? So many accidents are there, eſpecially in War, whereby the Divine Providence doth ſometimes interpoſe and give Victory to the weaker ſide.

And this hath been ſo apparent in all Ages, that even the *Heathen* did always acknowledge, in the Affairs of War, a ſpecial interpoſition of *Fortune*; by which the wiſer among them did underſtand the *Divine Providence. Plutarch,* ſpeaking of the *Romans*, ſays, that *Time* and *Fortune*, the very ſame with *Solomon's Time* and *Chance* here in the *Text*, *did lay the foundation of their greatneſs*, by which he aſcribes the ſucceſs to a remarkable Providence of God concurring with ſeveral happy Opportunities.

And *Livy*, their great Hiſtorian, hath this remarkable Obſervation, That *in all human affairs, eſpecially in matters of War, Fortune hath a mighty ſtroke.* And again, *No where,* ſays he, *is the event leſs anſwerable to expectation than in War; and therefore nothing is ſo ſlight and inconſiderable, which may not turn the Scales in a great matter.* And *Cæſar* himſelf, who was perhaps the moſt skilful and proſperous Warriour that ever was, makes the ſame acknowledgment; *As in all other things*, ſays he, *ſo particularly in War*, *Fortune hath a huge ſway.* And *Plutarch* obſerves, That there was no *Temple* at *Rome* dedicated to *Wiſdom* or *Valour*, but a moſt magnificent and ſtately one to *Fortune*; ſignifying hereby, that they did aſcribe their Succeſs infinitely more to the Providence of God, than to their own Courage and Conduct. I proceed now in the

II. *Second* place, to give ſome reaſon and account of this, Why the Providence of God doth ſometimes thus interpoſe to hinder and defeat the moſt probable deſigns of men. To bring men to an acknowledgment of his Providence, and of their dependence upon Him, and ſubordination to Him; and that He is the great Governour of the World, and *rules in the Kingdoms of men*; and that *all the inhabitants of the Earth are as nothing to Him*, and the power of Second Cauſes inconſiderable: That *He doth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none may ſtay his hand, or ſay unto him what doſt thou.*

God hath ſo order'd things, in the adminiſtration of the affairs of the World, as to encourage the uſe of means; and yet ſo, as to keep men in a continual dependance upon him for the efficacy and ſucceſs of them: To encourage Induſtry and Prudence, God generally permits things to their natural courſe, and to fall out according to the power and probability of ſecond Cauſes.

But then, leſt men ſhould caſt off Religion, and *deny the God that is above*; leſt they ſhould *truſt in their ſword and their bow, and ſay, the Lord hath not done this*; leſt men ſhould look upon themſelves as the Creators and Framers of their own Fortune, and when they do but a little outſtrip others in wiſdom or power, in the skill and conduct of humane affairs, they ſhould grow proud and preſumptuous, God is pleaſed ſometimes more remarkably to interpoſe, *to hide pride from man*, as the expreſſion is in *Job*; to check the haughtineſs and inſolence of mens ſpirits, and to keep them within the bounds of modeſty and humility; to make us to know *that we are but men*, and that the reins of the World are not in our hands, but that there is *One* above who ſways and governs all things here below.

And indeed if we ſhould ſuppoſe, in the firſt frame of things which we call

Nature, an immutable Order to be fix'd, and all things to go on in a conſtant courſe, according to the power and force of ſecond Cauſes, without any interpoſition of Providence to ſtop, or alter that courſe, upon any occaſion: In this caſe, the foundation of a great part of Religion, but eſpecially of Prayer to God would be quite taken away: Upon this Suppoſition, it would be the vaineſt thing in the World to pray to God for the good Succeſs of our undertakings, or to acknowledge Him as the Author of it: For if God do only look on, and permit all things to proceed in a ſettled and eſtabliſh'd courſe; then inſtead of praying to God we ought to ply the means, and to make the beſt proviſion and preparation we can for the effecting of what we deſire; and to rely upon that, without taking God at all into our counſel and conſideration. For all application to God by Prayer doth evidently ſuppoſe, that the Providence of God does frequently interpoſe, to over-rule events beſides and beyond the natural and ordinary courſe of things, and to ſteer them to a quite different Point, from that to which in humane probability they ſeem'd to tend.

So that it is every whit as neceſſary to Religion to believe the Providence of God, and that He governs the World, and does when He pleaſes interpoſe in the affairs of it, as that he made it at firſt. I come now in the

Third and laſt place, to make ſome Inferences ſuitable to the occaſion of this Day, from what hath been ſaid upon this Argument: And they ſhall be theſe. III.

Firſt, From hence we may learn, not to account Religion, and time ſpent in the Service of God, and in Prayer to Him for his Bleſſing upon our endeavours, to be any hindrance to our affairs. For after we have done all we can, the event is ſtill in God's hand, and reſts upon the diſpoſal of his Providence.

And did men firmly believe this, they would not neglect the duty of Prayer, and behave themſelves ſo careleſly, and unconcernedly, and irreverently in it, as we ſee too many do; they would not look upon every hour that is ſpent in Devotion as loſt from their buſineſs.

If men would but take a view of what hath happen'd to them in the courſe of a long Life, I believe moſt of us would ſee reaſon to acknowledge, that our Proſpertiy and Succeſs in any kind hath depended more upon happy opportunities, upon undeſign'd and unexpected occurrences, than upon our own prudent forecaſt and conduct.

And if this were well conſider'd by us, we ſhould not methinks be ſo apt to leave God out of our counſels and undertakings, as if he were a mere Name and Cypher in the World. It is, I am ſure, the advice of one that was much wiſer and more experienc'd, than any of us will pretend to be, I mean, *Solomon*, *Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own underſtanding: In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy paths: Be not wiſe in thine own eyes, fear the Lord and depart from evil.* Prov.3.5,6 There is no Principle that ought more firmly to be believed by us than this, That to live under a conſtant ſenſe and awe of Almighty God, to depend upon his Providence, and to ſeek his favour and bleſſing upon all our deſigns, being fearful to offend Him and careful to pleaſe Him, is a much nearer and ſurer way to Succeſs, than our own beſt Prudence and Preparations.

And therefore at ſuch a time, more eſpecially, when we are going to War, or engaged in it, we ſhould break off our ſins by repentance and the ſincere reſolution of a better courſe: We ſhould earneſtly implore the bleſſing of God upon our undertakings; and not only take great care that our Cauſe be juſt, but likewiſe that there be *no wicked thing* amongſt us, to drive God out of our Camp; *no accurſed* thing, that may provoke Him to deliver us into the hands of our Enemies. It was a particular Law given by God to Deut. 23. 9. the *Jews*, *When the Hoſt goeth forth againſt thine Enemy, then keep thy ſelf from every wicked thing*; *then*, that is, more eſpecially at ſuch a time.

And this is a neceſſary Caution, not only to thoſe who are perſonally engaged in the War, that by the favour of God they may have their heads covered in the Day of Battel, or if God ſhall ſuffer them to fall by the hand of the Enemy, that having made their peace beforehand with Him, they may not only have the comfort of a good Cauſe, but of a good Conſcience, void of offence towards God and Men.

But this Caution likewiſe concerns thoſe, who are intereſted in the ſucceſs and event of the War; as we all are, not only in regard of our Lives and Eſtates, but of that which ought to be much dearer to us, our Religion and the freedom of our Conſciences; which are now every whit as much at ſtake, as our Civil Intereſts and Liberties. And therefore as we tender any, or all of theſe, we ſhould be very careful *to keep our ſelves from every wicked thing*; that they who fight for us, may not for our ſins, and for our ſakes, turn their backs in the day of battel, and fall by the Sword of the Enemy.

Secondly, From hence we may likewiſe learn, ſo to uſe the means as ſtill to depend upon God; who can, as he pleaſes, bleſs the Counſels and Endeavours of Men, or blaſt them and make them of none effect. For as God hath promiſed nothing but to a wiſe and diligent uſe of means, ſo all our prudence, and induſtry, and moſt careful preparations may miſcarry, if He do not favour our deſign: For without Him nothing is wiſe, nothing is ſtrong, nothing is able to reach and attain its end.

We ſhould indeed uſe the means as vigorouſly, as if God did nothing; and when we have done ſo, we ſhould depend upon God for the ſucceſs of thoſe means, as if we our ſelves had done nothing, but did expect all from his favour and bleſſing: For when all is done, we are only ſafe under his Protection, and ſure of ſucceſs from his Bleſſing.

For whatever vain and *fooliſh* men may *ſay in their hearts*, *There is*, *There is a* God, that made the World, and adminiſters the affairs of it with great Wiſdom and Goodneſs; elſe how came any of us into Being, or what do we here? Did we not moſt aſſuredly believe that there is a God, that governs the World and ſuperintends humane affairs; the firſt wiſh of a Wiſe man would be, to ſteal out of Being, if he could; and that the ſame Chance or Neceſſity that brought him into the World, would take the firſt opportunity to carry him out. For to be every moment liable to preſent, and great, and certain Evils; and to have no ſecurity againſt the continuance of them, or the return of the ſame or worſe Evils; nor to have any aſſurance of a better and more durable ſtate of reſt and happineſs hereafter, is in truth ſo very melancholy a meditation, that I do not know any conſideration in the World that is of force and power enough to ſupport the mind of man under it: And were there not in the World a *Being*, that is wiſer, and better, and more powerful than our ſelves, and that keeps things from running into endleſs confuſion and diſorder; a *Being* that loves us, and takes care of us, and that will certainly conſider and reward all the good that we do, and all the evil that we ſuffer upon his account, I do not ſee what reaſon any man could have to take any comfort and joy in Being, or to wiſh the continuance of it for one moment.

Thirdly and laſtly, The Conſideration of what hath been ſaid upon this Argument, ſhould keep us from being too ſanguine and confident of the moſt likely deſigns and undertakings; becauſe theſe do not always anſwer the probability of ſecond Cauſes and Means; and never leſs, than when we do with the greateſt confidence rely upon them; when we promiſe moſt to our ſelves from them, then are they moſt likely to deceive us: They are, as the *Prophet* compares them, like *a broken reed*, which a man may walk with in his hand, whilſt he lays no great ſtreſs upon it; but if he truſt to it, and lean his whole weight on it, it will not only fail him, but even *pierce him through.*

And we cannot do a greater prejudice to our affairs, when they are in the moſt hopeful and likely condition to ſucceed and do well, than to ſhut God and his Providence out of our counſels and conſideration. When we paſs God by, and take no notice of Him, but will rely upon our own wiſdom and ſtrength, we provoke him to leave us *in the hands of our own counſel*, and to let us ſee what weak and fooliſh Creatures we are: And a man is never in greater danger of drowning, than when he claſps his arms cloſeſt about himſelf: Beſides, that God loves to reſiſt the ſelf-confident and preſumptuous, and *to ſcatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*

And as in all our concernments we ought to have a great regard to God, the Supreme diſpoſer of all things, and earneſtly to ſeek his favour and bleſſing upon all our undertakings, ſo more eſpecially in the affairs of War; in which the Providence of God is pleas'd many times in a very peculiar manner to interpoſe and intereſt it ſelf: And there is great reaſon to think he does ſo; becauſe all War is, as it were, an Appeal to God, and a reference of thoſe Cauſes to the deciſion of his Providence, which through the Pride, and Injuſtice, and perverſe paſſions of men, can receive no other determination.

And here God loves to ſhew himſelf, and in an eminent manner to take part with Right and Juſtice againſt thoſe *mighty Oppreſſors* of *the Earth*, who like an overflowing flood would bear down all before them: In this caſe, the Providence of God is ſometimes pleas'd to give a remarkable check to great Power and Violence, and to *One* that vainly gives out himſelf *not unequal to the whole World*; by very weak and contemptible means; and, as *the Apoſtle* elegantly expreſſeth it, *by the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are:* And to ſay to *Him*, as God once did to the proud King of *Aſſyria: Whom haſt thou reproached and blaſphemed, and againſt whom haſt thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even againſt the Holy one of* Iſrael. *Haſt thou not heard long ago, that I have done it; and of ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to paſs, that thou ſhouldeſt be to lay waſte defenced Cities into ruinous heaps: Therefore their Inhabitants were of ſmall power, they were diſmayed and confounded,* &c. *But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage againſt me: Becauſe thy rage againſt me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook into thy noſe, and my bridle into thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou cameſt.——The zeal of the Lord of Hoſts ſhall do this.* Iſa. 37. 23, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32.

But more eſpecially, in vindication of his oppreſſed Truth and Religion, and in the great and ſignal Deliverances of his Church and People, God is wont to take the conduct of affairs into his own hands, and not to proceed by humane rules and meaſures: He then bids ſecond Cauſes to ſtand by, that *his own Arm may be ſeen*, and *his Salvation may appear:* He raiſeth the ſpirits of men above their natural pitch, *and giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaſeth ſtrength*, as the *Prophet* expreſſeth it.

Thus hath the Providence of God very viſibly appear'd in our late Deliverance;

rance; in ſuch a manner, as I know not whether He ever did for any other Nation, except the People of *Iſrael*, when He deliver'd them *from the Houſe of Bondage by ſo mighty a hand and ſo out-ſtretched an arm:* And yet too many among us, I ſpeak it this day to our ſhame, do not ſeem to have the leaſt ſenſe of this great Deliverance, or of the hand of God which was ſo viſible in it; but like the Children of *Iſrael* when they were brought out of *Egypt*, we are full of *murmurings* and diſcontent againſt God the Author, and his Servant the happy Inſtrument under God of this our Deliverance. What the
Iſa. 26.10, 11. *Prophet* ſays of *that* People, may I fear be too juſtly apply'd to us, *Let favour be ſhewn to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteouſneſs; in the Land of uprightneſs he will deal unjuſtly, and will not behold the Majeſty of the Lord: Lord, When thy hand is lifted up, they will not ſee; but they ſhall ſee, and be aſhamed:* And I hope I may add that which follows in the next *verſe, Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou alſo haſt wrought all our works for us.* What God hath already done for our deliverance is, I hope, an earneſt that He will carry it on to a perfect Peace and Settlement; and this, notwithſtanding our high Provocations and horrible Ingratitude to *the God of our Life*, and *of our Salvation.*

And whenever the Providence of God thinks fit thus to interpoſe in humane affairs, *the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong:* For which reaſon *their Majeſties*, in their great Piety and Wiſdom, and from a juſt ſenſe of the Providence of Almighty God, which *rules in the Kingdoms of men*, have thought fit to ſet apart this *Day* for ſolemn Repentance and Humiliation: That the many and heinous Sins, which we in this Nation have been, and ſtill are guilty of, and which are of all other our greateſt and moſt dangerous Enemies, may not *ſeparate between God and us*, and *hinder good things from us*, and cover us with confuſion in the day of our danger and diſtreſs: And likewiſe, earneſtly to implore the favour and bleſſing of Almighty God upon *their Majeſties* Forces and Preparations by Sea and Land: And more particularly, for the preſervation of *his Majeſties* Sacred Perſon, upon whom ſo much depends, and who is contented again to hazard Himſelf to ſave us.

To conclude; There is no ſuch way to engage the Providence of God for us, as by real Repentance and Reformation; and by doing all we can, in our ſeveral Places from the higheſt to the loweſt, by the proviſion of wiſe and effectual Laws for the diſcountenancing and ſuppreſſing of Profaneneſs and Vice, and by the careful and due execution of them, and by the more kindly and powerful influence of a good Example, to retrieve the ancient Piety and Virtue of the Nation: For without this, whatever we may think of the firmneſs of our preſent Settlement, we cannot long be upon good terms with Almighty God, upon whoſe favour depends the proſperity and ſtability of the preſent and future Times.

I have but one thing more to mind you of; and that is, to ſtir up your Charity towards the Poor; which is likewiſe a great part of the Duty of this Day, and which ought always to accompany our Prayers and Faſtings: *Thy Prayers and thine Alms*, ſaith the *Angel* to *Cornelius*, are *come up before God:* And therefore if we deſire that our Prayers ſhould reach Heaven, and receive a gracious anſwer from God, we muſt ſend up our Alms along with them.

And inſtead of all other Arguments to this purpoſe, I ſhall only recite to you the plain and perſwaſive words of God Himſelf, in which He declares
Iſa. 58.5, 6, &c. what kind of Faſt is acceptable to Him: *Is it ſuch a Faſt as I have choſen? a Day for a man to afflict his ſoul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a Faſt, and an acceptable*

Day to the Lord? Is not this the Faſt that I have choſen? To looſe the bands of wickedneſs, and to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke: Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thine houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh? Then ſhall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy ſalvation ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily; thy righteouſneſs, or thine *Alms, ſhall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord ſhall be thy reward: Then ſhalt thou call, and I will anſwer thee; thou ſhalt cry, and He ſhall ſay, here I am.*

Now to *Him that ſitteth upon the Throne,* and to *the Lamb that was ſlain:* To *God, even our Father,* and *to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the firſt begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth: Unto Him, who hath loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood; and hath made us Kings and Prieſts unto God and his Father: To him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever,* Amen.

And the God of Peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom be glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

A
FAST-SERMON
Preached before the
Lord-Mayor, &c.
ON
Wedneſday, June *the* 18th. 1690.

To the Right Honourable

Sir *THOMAS PILKINGTON*,

Lord Mayor of the City of *London*:

AND THE

COURT of ALDERMEN.

My Lord,

IN Obedience to your Commands, I have publiſh'd this Sermon lately preach'd before you, and do now humbly preſent you with it; heartily wiſhing it may have that good effect for the Reformation of our Lives, and Reconciliation of our unhappy Differences, which was ſincerely intended by,

My Lord,

Your moſt Faithful

and Humble Servant,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

SERMON XXXVII.

The way to prevent the Ruin of a Sinful People.

JEREMIAH VI. 8.

Be thou inſtructed O Jeruſalem, *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.*

THeſe Words are a merciful warning from God to the People of *Iſrael* by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, the laſt Prophet that God ſent to them before their Captivity in *Babylon*.

The time of his Prophecy was of a long continuance, above the ſpace of forty years, *viz.* from the thirteenth year of King *Joſiah*, to the eleventh year of King *Zedekiah*, the year in which *Jeruſalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babylon*.

This I obſerve, to ſhew the great patience of God to a ſinful Nation. And this is much the ſame ſpace of time that God gave warning by our Bleſſed *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* to the ſame People of the *Jews* concerning their final Deſtruction. For it was about forty years after the Prediction of our Saviour concerning it, juſt before his Death, that the terrible Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the *Jewiſh* Nation was executed upon them by the *Romans*, or rather chiefly by themſelves; as I ſhall preſently ſhew. Of which dreadful Deſolation, the firſt taking of *Jeruſalem* by *Nebuchadnezzar*, and their Captivity into *Babylon* was a kind of Type and Forerunner. For, as *Joſephus* obſerves, the taking of *Jeruſalem* by *Titus Veſpaſian* did happen in the very ſame Month, and on the very ſame Day of the Month in which *Jeruſalem* was taken by *Nebuchadnezzar*, *viz.* upon our *tenth* of *Auguſt*.

And it is not unworthy of our Obſervation, that the time of God's warning is wont to hold ſome ſort of proportion with the extent of his Judgments. Before the univerſal Deluge which deſtroyed the whole World, *Noah* and his Family only excepted, God gave a much longer warning by the preaching of *Noah*, for the ſpace of an *hundred and twenty years*. Before the deſtruction of a particular Nation, if we may judge by God's dealing with the *Jews*, his time of warning is *forty years*. And before the deſtruction of a particular City, if we may conclude any thing from the ſingle example of *Niniveh*, the time of God's warning is yet much ſhorter, the ſpace of *forty days*.

And now to what end doth God exerciſe ſo much patience and threaten ſo long before-hand, but that by the terrour of his threatnings men may be brought to repentance, and by repentance may prevent the execution of them? For all the while that God by his Prophet threatens ruin and deſtruction to the People of *Iſrael*, he earneſtly invites and urges them to repentance, that by this means they might eſcape the ruin that was denounced againſt them: This being a condition perpetually implyed in the denunciation of publick Judgments, that if a People repent of the evil of their doings, God alſo will repent of the evil which he ſaid he would do unto them, as he expreſly declares *chap.* 18. *verſ.* 7, 8. *At what inſtant I ſpeak concerning a Nation and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to deſtroy it, if that Nation againſt whom I have pronounc'd turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil which I thought to do unto them.* And here in the *Text,* after God had threaten'd deſtruction to *Jeruſalem*, becauſe of the overflowing of all manner of wickedneſs and oppreſſion in the midſt of her, he gives her a merciful warning to prevent this ruin and deſolation by repentance, *verſ.* 6, 7. *Thus hath the Lord of Hoſts ſaid, Hew ye down trees, and caſt a mount againſt* Jeruſalem; *this is a City to be viſited, ſhe is wholly oppreſſion in the midſt of her. As a fountain caſteth out waters, ſo ſhe caſteth out her wickedneſs. Before me continually is grief and wounds.* And yet when he had pronounced this fearful Sentence upon her, he tells her that all this miſery and deſolation might yet be prevented, if they would but hearken to the counſel of God, and be inſtructed by him concerning the things of their peace: For ſo it follows in the next words, *Be thou inſtructed O* Jeruſalem, *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited. Be thou inſtructed O* Jeruſalem, that is, do but now at laſt take that counſel and warning which hath ſo often and ſo long been tender'd to thee by my ſervant the Prophet, who hath now for the ſpace of forty years continually, and that with great earneſtneſs and importunity, been warning thee of this danger, and calling thee to repentance and a better mind.

Leſt my ſoul depart from thee. In the *Hebrew* it is, *Leſt my ſoul be looſened and disjointed from thee*, as it is in the margin of your Bibles; hereby ſignifying, in the moſt emphatical manner, the wonderful affection and kindneſs which God had for his People, and how ſtrongly his ſoul was link'd to them, and how loth he was to withdraw his love from them; it was like the tearing off of a limb, or the plucking of a joint in ſunder; ſo unwilling is God to come to extremity; ſo hardly is he brought to reſolve upon the ruin even of a ſinful Nation: How much rather would he, that they would be inſtructed and receive correction, and hearken to the things of their peace? But if they will not be perſwaded, if no warning will work upon them, *his ſpirit will not always ſtrive with them*; but *his ſoul* will at laſt, though with great unwillingneſs and reluctancy, *depart from them.*

And then, no interceſſion will prevail for them; as he threatens by the ſame Prophet, *chap.* 15. *verſe* 1. *Then ſaid the Lord unto me, though* Moſes *and* Samuel *ſtood before me, yet my mind could not be towards this People; caſt them out of my ſight and let them go forth*; away with them into Captivity, for they have loſt my heart, and no interceſſion of others for them, nothing but their own repentance can recover it.

And when his Soul is once departed from a People, and his heart turned againſt them, then all ſorts of evils and calamities will be let looſe upon them; as we may read in the next *verſe* of that *Chapter*: *And it ſhall come to paſs if they ſay unto thee, whether ſhall we go forth? Then ſhalt thou tell them, Thus ſaith the Lord, ſuch as are for death to death, and ſuch as are for the ſword to the ſword, and ſuch as are for the famine to the famine, and ſuch as are for the captivity to the captivity.* Jer. 15.2. For then God will be weary of repenting, as he tells them *verſe* 6. *Thou haſt forſaken me, ſaith the Lord, thou art gone backward; therefore will I ſtretch out my hand againſt thee, and deliver thee, I am weary of repenting.* By our obſtinate impenitency we harden

den the heart of God againſt us, and make *him weary of repenting.* And when his ſoul is thus departed from a People, nothing remains but a fearful expectation of ruin. *Wo unto them,* ſaith God by the Prophet, *when I depart from them.* Hoſ. 9. 12. Therefore *be thou inſtructed* O Jeruſalem, *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.*

Having given this account of the Words, I ſhall obſerve from them three things well worth our conſideration.

Firſt, The infinite goodneſs and patience of God towards a ſinful People, and his great unwillingneſs to bring ruin and deſtruction upon them *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a Land not inhabited.* How loth is He that things ſhould come to this extremity? He is not without great difficulty, and ſome kind of violence, as it were, offered to himſelf, brought to this ſevere reſolution; his ſoul is, as it were, *rent* and *diſjoined* from them.

Secondly, You ſee here what is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the miſery and ruin of a ſinful People. If they will be *inſtructed* and take warning by the threatnings of God, and will become wiſer and better, then *his ſoul* will not *depart from them,* he will not bring upon them the *deſolation* which he hath threatned.

Thirdly, You have here intimated the miſerable caſe and condition of a People, when God takes off his affection from them, and gives over all further care and concernment for them. Wo unto them, when *his ſoul departs from them.* For when God once leaves them, then all ſorts of evils and calamities will break in upon them.

I ſhall ſpeak as briefly as I can to theſe *three* Obſervations from the *Text.*

I. *Firſt,* I obſerve the infinite patience and goodneſs of God towards a ſinful People, and his great unwillingneſs to bring ruin and deſtruction upon them; *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a land not inhabited.* How loth is God that things ſhould come to this? He is very patient to particular perſons, notwithſtanding their great and innumerable provocations. *God is ſtrong and patient,* though men *provoke him every day.* And much greater is his patience to whole Nations and great Communities of men.

How great was it to the old World, *when the long ſuffering of God waited in the days of* Noah, for the ſpace of an hundred and twenty years? And did not expire, till *he ſaw that the wickedneſs of man was grown great upon the earth, and that all fleſh had corrupted its way;* not till it was neceſſary to drown the World to cleanſe it, and to deſtroy Mankind to reform it, by beginning a *new* World upon the only righteous Family that was left of all the laſt generation of the *old.* For ſo God teſtifies concerning *Noah,* when he commanded him to enter into the Ark, ſaying, *Come thou and all thy houſe into the* Ark; *for thee,* that is, thee only, *have I ſeen righteous before me in this Generation.* Gen. 7. 1.

The patience of God was great likewiſe to *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* and the Cities about them. For when *the cry of their ſins had reached heaven,* and called loud for vengeance to be poured down upon them, to expreſs the wonderful patience of God toward ſuch grievous Sinners, though nothing is hid from his ſight and knowledge, yet he is repreſented as coming down from Heaven to Earth on purpoſe to enquire into the truth of things, and *whether they were altogether according to the cry that was come up to him.* And when he found things as bad as was poſſible, yet then was he willing to have come almoſt to the loweſt terms imaginable, that if there had been but *ten righteous perſons* in thoſe wicked Cities, *he would not have deſtroy'd them for the ten's ſake.*

Nay he ſeems to come to lower terms yet, with the City of *Jeruſalem, Jer.* 5. 1. *Run ye to and fro through the ſtreets of* Jeruſalem, *and ſee now and know, and ſeek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, and ſeeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.*

What can be imagin'd more ſlow, and mild, and merciful, than the proceedings of the Divine Juſtice againſt a ſinful People? God is repreſented in Scripture as taking a long time to *make ready his bow,* and to *whet his glittering ſword,* before *his hand takes hold of* vengeance; as if the inſtruments of his wrath lay by him blunt and ruſty and unready for uſe. Many a time he threatens, and many a time lifts up his hand, before he gives the fatal blow. And how glad is he when any good man will ſtep in and interpoſe to ſtay his hand? As we read *Pſal.* 106.23. *Therefore he ſaid,* ſpeaking of the People of *Iſrael, that he would deſtroy them, had not* Moſes *his ſervant ſtood in the breach to turn away his wrath, leſt he ſhould deſtroy them.* And how kindly doth God take it of *Phinehas,* as a moſt acceptable piece of ſervice done to him, and which he hardly knew how ſufficiently to reward, that he was a means of putting a ſtop to his anger againſt the People of *Iſrael:* Inſomuch that the Pſalmiſt tells us, that *it was accounted to him for righteouſneſs to all generations for evermore.* I will recite the whole paſſage at large, becauſe it is remarkable. When the People of *Iſrael* were ſeduced into Idolatry and Whoredom by the Daughters of *Moab, Phinehas* in great zeal ſtood up and executed judgment upon *Zimri* and *Cozbi* in the very act: By which means the Plague which was broken out upon the Congregation of *Iſrael* was preſently ſtayed. Hear what God ſays to *Moſes* concerning this act of *Phinehas. The Lord ſpake unto* Moſes *ſaying,* Phinehas *the ſon of* Eleazar, *the ſon of* Aaron *the Prieſt, hath turned away my wrath from the Children of* Iſrael, *whilſt he was zealous for my ſake that I conſumed them not. Wherefore ſay, Behold I give unto him my Covenant of Peace, and he ſhall have it, and his ſeed after him, even the Covenant of an everlaſting Prieſthood, becauſe he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the Children of* Iſrael: That which God takes ſo kindly at his hands, next to his zeal for Him, is, that he pacified God's wrath towards the Children of *Iſrael.*

And thus did God from time to time deal with the People of *Iſrael,* that great Example of the Old Teſtament of the merciful methods of the Divine Providence towards a ſinful Nation. And an Example, as St. *Paul* tells us, purpoſely *recorded for our admonition upon whom the ends of the World are come.* 1 Cor. 10. 11.

Let us therefore conſider a little the aſtoniſhing patience of God towards that perverſe People. After all the ſigns and wonders which he had wrought in their deliverance out of *Egypt,* and for their ſupport in the Wilderneſs; and notwithſtanding their groſs and ſtupid infidelity and horrible ingratitude to God their Saviour, and all their rebellious murmurings and diſcontents, yet he ſuffer'd their manners for the ſpace of forty years.

And when they were at laſt peaceably ſettled in the promiſed Land; notwithſtanding their frequent relapſes into Idolatry, with what patience did God expect their repentance, and the reſult of all the merciful meſſages and warnings given them from time to time by his Prophets, as one that earneſtly deſir'd it, and even long'd for it? Jer. 4. 14. *O* Jeruſalem, *waſh thine heart from wickedneſs, that thou mayeſt be ſaved; how long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* that is, how long wilt thou delude thy ſelf with vain hopes of eſcaping the Judgments of God by any other way than by repentance? Jer. 13. 27. And again, *O* Jeruſalem, *wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it once be?*

And *chap.* 8. *verſ.* 6. ſays God there, *I hearkened and I heard, but they ſpake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done?* Where God is repreſented, after the manner of men, waiting with great patience, as one that would have been glad to have heard any penitent word drop from them, to have ſeen any ſign of their repentance and return to a better mind.

And when they made ſome ſhews of repentance, and had ſome fits of good reſolution that did preſently vaniſh and come to nothing, how paſſionately does God complain of their fickleneſs and inconſtancy? *O* Ephraim, *what ſhall I do unto thee?* O *Judah*, what ſhall I do unto thee? *for your goodneſs is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*

And at laſt, when nothing would do, with what difficulty and reluctancy does God deliver them up into the hands of their Enemies? *How ſhall I give thee up* Ephraim? *How ſhall I deliver thee* Judah? *How ſhall I make thee as* Admah? *how ſhall I ſet thee as* Zeboim? *mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together; I will not execute the fierceneſs of mine anger, I will not deſtroy* Ephraim. What a conflict is here? what tenderneſs and yerning of his bowels towards them? He cannot find in his heart to give them up, till he is forced to it by the laſt neceſſity. Hoſ. 11. 8, 9

And when the Nation of the *Jews*, after their return from the Captivity of *Babylon*, had in the courſe of ſeveral Ages greatly corrupted themſelves, and fill'd up the meaſure of their ſins by *crucifying the Lord of Life and Glory*, yet how ſlow was the patience of God in bringing that fatal and final Deſtruction upon them? Not till after the moſt merciful warnings given to them, by the *Apoſtles* of our *Lord* and *Saviour*; not till after the moſt obſtinate impenitency of forty years, under the moſt powerful means of Repentance that any People in the World ever enjoyed. I proceed to the

II. *Second* Obſervation from the *Text*, *namely*, What is the only proper and effectual means to prevent the ruin of a ſinful People? And that is, if they will be *inſtructed* and take warning by the Threatnings of God to become wiſer and better, then *his ſoul will not depart from them*, and he will not bring upon them the *deſolation* threatned. *Be thou inſtructed*, O Jeruſalem, *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, and I make thee deſolate, a Land not inhabited*; intimating, or rather plainly declaring to us, that if we will receive inſtruction and take warning the evil threaten'd ſhall not come. For what other reaſon can there be, why God ſhould threaten ſo long before he ſtrikes, and ſo earneſtly preſs men to repentance, but that he might have the opportunity to ſpare them, and to ſhew mercy to them?

And indeed, as I obſerv'd before, all the Denunciations and Threatnings of God to a ſinful Nation do carry this tacit condition in them, that if that Nation turn from their evil ways, God will repent of the evil which he thought to do unto them. For God never paſſeth ſo irrevocable a Sentence upon a Nation, as to exclude the caſe of repentance: Nay on the contrary, He gives all imaginable encouragement to it, and is always ready to meet it, with a pardon in his hand. *How often would I have gathered thee*, ſays our merciful Lord when he wept over *Jeruſalem*, *as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, and ye would not; therefore your Houſe is left unto you deſolate.*

God is very merciful to particular perſons upon their repentance. When the *Prodigal Son* in the *Parable*, after all his riot and lewdneſs came to himſelf and reſolv'd to return home, his *Father ſeeing him yet afar off* coming towards him, *came out to meet him, and had compaſſion on him and kiſſed him.*

And can any of us be ſo obſtinate and hard-hearted, as not preſently to reſolve to repent and return, and to meet the compaſſions of ſuch a Father? Who, after we have offended him to the uttermoſt, is upon the firſt diſcovery of our repentance ready to be as kind to us, as he could poſſibly have been if we had never offended him.

And much more is God ready to receive a Nation upon their ſincere Repentance; when his Judgments muſt needs make great havock, and ſo many are like to ſuffer under them. This Conſideration God urgeth and pleads with his froward Prophet, in behalf of the great City of *Niniveh*. *And* Jonah 4. 11. *ſhall not I ſpare that great City of* Niniveh, *wherein are more than ſixſcore thouſand perſons, who cannot diſcern their right hand from their left?* that is, ſo many innocent Children, by which we may judge of the vaſt number of the reſt of the Inhabitants. For this is a great conſideration with God in his ſending of Publick Calamities, the multitude of the Sufferers; and that not only the guilty but the innocent alſo, without a ſpecial and miraculous Providence, muſt be involved in a common Calamity.

Sometimes God reſpites his Judgments upon the meer external humiliation of a People, and ſome formal teſtimonies and expreſſions of their repentance. Pſal. 78. When the People of *Iſrael ſought God and enquired early after him*, though *they did but flatter him with their mouth*, and *their heart was not right with him*, yet the *Pſalmiſt* tells us, *that being full of compaſſion, he forgave their iniquity and deſtroyed them not*; that is, he forgave them ſo far as to reſpite their ruin.

And much more will a ſincere and effectual Repentance ſtay God's hand, and infallibly turn him from the fierceneſs of his anger: Inſomuch that after he had fix'd and determin'd the very Day for the Deſtruction of *Niniveh*, and had engaged the credit of his Prophet in it, yet as ſoon as *he ſaw their works, and that they turned from their evil ways*, and how glad was he to ſee it? he preſently *repented of the evil which he had ſaid he would do unto them, and he did it not*. In this Caſe God does not ſtand upon the reputation of his Prophet, by whom he had ſent ſo peremptory a Meſſage to them; but his Mercy breaks through all conſiderations, and *rejoyceth againſt judgment*: For he cannot find in his heart to ruin thoſe who by the terror of his Judgments will be brought to repentance.

And this ſurely is a mighty motive and encouragement to repentance, to be aſſur'd that we ſhall find mercy; and that when our ruin is even decreed, and all the inſtruments of God's wrath are fix'd and ready for execution, and his hand is juſt taking hold of vengeance, yet even then a ſincere repentance will mitigate his hotteſt diſpleaſure and turn away his wrath. And if we will not come in upon theſe terms, we extort the Judgments of God from him, and force him to depart from us, and with violent hands we pull down vengeance upon our own heads.

III. *Thirdly* and laſtly, the *Text* intimates to us the miſerable caſe and condition of a People when God takes off his heart and affection from them, when he gives over all further care and concernment for them, and abandons them to their own wickedneſs and folly, and to the miſerable effects and conſequences thereof: *Wo unto them, when his ſoul departs from them*: For then all ſorts of evils and calamities will ruſh in, and *wrath will come upon them to the uttermoſt*; as was threaten'd to the *Jews* a little before their final deſtruction, and executed upon them in the moſt terrible and amazing manner that ever was from the foundation of the World. *Theſe*, as our Bleſſed Saviour expreſſes it, were *days of vengeance* indeed, that *all things which were written*, that is foretold by *Moſes* and the *Prophets* concerning the fearful end of this perverſe and ſtiff-neck'd People, *might be fulfilled.*

And becauſe my *Text* ſpeaks to *Jeruſalem*, *Be thou inſtructed*, O Jeruſalem, *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, leſt I make thee deſolate, a Land not inhabited*; though this was ſpoken to *Jeruſalem* before her Captivity into *Babylon*, yet becauſe this firſt Captivity was but a faint Type of her laſt and final Deſolation by the *Romans*, when *God's Soul* was indeed *departed from Her*, and *Judea* was *left deſolate, a Land not inhabited*: I ſhall therefore briefly repreſent to you the full effect of this Threatning in her laſt final Deſtruction, when *God's Soul* was, as it were, perfectly *looſen'd* and *disjointed* from Her: That you may ſee what the fierceneſs and power of God's Anger is, when *he departs from them*, and *wrath comes upon them to the uttermoſt*, becauſe they would not be *inſtructed and know the time of their viſitation.*

Thus it was with the *Jews*, about forty years after the Paſſion of our *Lord*, whom *with wicked hands they had crucified and ſlain*: Then was *God's ſoul departed from them*: Then darkneſs and deſolation came upon them; and they were in a far worſe condition than a Country would be that is forſaken of the Sun and left condemn'd to a perpetual Night, in which darkneſs and diſorder, faction and fury do reign and rage; together with all the fatal conſequences of *zeal and ſtrife*, which, St. *James* tells us, are *confuſion and every evil work.* For when God is once gone, all the good and happineſs of Mankind departs together with Him: Then men fall foul upon one another, divide into Parties and Factions, and execute the vengeance of God upon themſelves with their own hands.

Thus it happen'd to the *Jewiſh Nation*, when the meaſure of their iniquity was full, and their final ruin was approaching. And that we might know their Fate, and be inſtructed by it, God provided and preſerv'd a faithful Hiſtorian on purpoſe, who was an Eye witneſs of all that befel them: I mean *Joſephus*, who was perſonally engaged, and was a conſiderable Commander in the Wars of the *Jews* with the *Romans*, before the Siege of *Jeruſalem*: And during the Siege was preſent in the *Roman* Camp, and being a *Jew* himſelf hath tranſmitted theſe things to Poſterity in a moſt exact and admirable *Hiſtory*: ſuch a Hiſtory, as no man that hath the heart and bowels of a man can read without the greateſt pity and aſtoniſhment.

In the *Preface* of that lamentable *Hiſtory* he tells us, *that all the misfortunes and calamities which the World from the beginning of it had ſeen, compar'd with this laſt Calamity of the* Jewiſh *Nation, were but ſlight and inconſiderable.* He tells us likewiſe, that their *Civil Diſſenſions* were the next and immediate cauſe of their confuſion and ruin.

And this more than once: For when *Pompey*, about ſixty years before our *Saviour*'s birth, ſate down before *Jeruſalem*, he tells us, * that the Factions and Diviſions which they had among themſelves were the cauſe of the taking the City and Temple at that time. And when they rebelled afterwards, that the Heads of their Factions provok'd the *Romans*, and brought them unwillingly upon them, and at laſt forced the beſt natur'd Prince in the World, *Titus Veſpaſian*, to that ſeverity which he moſt earneſtly deſired by all means to have prevented. And he further tells us, that even before the Siege of *Jeruſalem*, the Cities of *Judea* had all of them Civil Diſcords among themſelves, and that in every City one part of the *Jews* fought againſt another.

Lib.1.c.3.

Lib.4.c.5.

And when *Jeruſalem* began to be beſieged, What a miſerable condition was it in, by the cruelty of the *Zealots* under the command of *John* the Son of *Giorah*? And preſently after another Faction aroſe under *Simon*, who enter'd into the City with a freſh Force and aſſaulted the *Zealots* in the Temple:

ſo that moſt miſerable havock was made between them. And then a *third* Lib.7.c.1. Faction ſtarted up under *Eleazer*, as bad as either of the other: So that infinite almoſt were the numbers of the People within the City that were barbarouſly ſlain by theſe Seditions.

And what an infatuation was this? when the Enemy was at the Gates and ready to break in upon them, to employ their whole ſtrength and force againſt one another: When the ſame courage and fury, which they ſpent ſo freely upon themſelves, had it been turn'd with the like deſperateneſs and obſtinacy upon the *Romans*, might have endanger'd the whole force of the *Roman* Empire. Once or twice indeed they ſeem'd to lay aſide their enmity for a little while, and to unite in the common defence; but as ſoon as the danger of a preſent aſſault was over, they relaps'd into their former ſtate of inteſtine enmity and diſſention, as if that had been their main buſineſs, and the preſervation of their City againſt the *Romans* only a work by the by, and not much to be regarded.

And to add to all their other miſeries, their were ſo blinded by their own rage and madneſs, that they wilfully brought upon themſelves an extreme Famine. For, as the *Hiſtorian* tells us, they themſelves ſet on fire vaſt ſtores of Corn and other neceſſaries, ſufficient to have ſerv'd them for many years; and by this means the City was much ſooner reduc'd, even by a Famine of their own making, and which could not have been brought upon them but by themſelves.

This Famine, beſides all the other miſeries and cruelties which it occaſion'd within the City, did force great numbers of them to ſteal out by night into the *Roman* Camp; where they met with as cruel but a ſpeedier death. For *Titus*, in hope to reduce them the ſooner by terrour, order'd all thoſe that came out of the City to be crucified before the Walls. Which order was ſo ſeverely executed, that for ſeveral days five hundred a day were crucified, till there was neither room left to place Croſſes in, nor Wood whereof to make them: So that they who once cried out ſo vehemently againſt our *Saviour*, *Crucifie him*, *Crucifie him*, had enough of it at laſt, and by the juſt and moſt remarkable Judgments of God were paid home in their own kind.

Behold the ſad Fate of a ſinful People, when God is departed from them! Then all evils overtake them at once. For as their miſery increaſed, ſo did Lib.5.c.2. their Impiety to that degree, that the *Hiſtorian* tells us, *they ſcorned and mocked at all divine and holy things, and derided the Oracles of the Prophets, eſteeming them no better than Fables*; and, in a word, were carried to that extremity of wickedneſs, as not only to prophane their *Temple* in the higheſt manner, and to break the Laws of their own Religion, but even to violate the Laws of Nature and Humanity in the groſſeſt Inſtances: which made Lib.6.c.11. their *Hiſtorian* to give that diſmal character of them, *that as he thought no City ever ſuffer'd ſuch things, ſo no Nation, from the beginning of the World, did ever ſo abound in all manner of wickedneſs and impiety*: A certain ſign that *God's Soul* was *departed* from them.

And the ſame *Hiſtorian* afterwards, upon conſideration of the lamentable ſtate into which their Seditions had brought them, breaks out into this doleful lamentation over them, Lib.7.c.1. *O miſerable City! what didſt thou ſuffer from the* Romans, *though at laſt they ſet thee on fire to purge thee from thy ſins, that is to be compar'd with thoſe miſeries which thou haſt brought upon thy ſelf?*

To ſuch a diſmal ſtate did things come at laſt, that, as the ſame *Hiſtorian* relates, *many of the* Jews *prayed for the good ſucceſs of their Enemies, to deliver them from their civil Diſſenſions, the Calamity whereof was ſo great that* *their final Deſtruction by the* Romans *did rather put an end to their miſery than increaſe it,*

———*En! quo diſcordia Cives*
Perduxit miſeros———

To conclude this ſad Story. It was the *Jews* themſelves that by their own folly and diſſenſions forc'd the *Romans* to this ſorrowful Victory over them; for in truth all the remorſe and pity was on the Enemies ſide. The *Romans* were little more than Spectators in this cruel Tragedy, the *Jews* acted it upon themſelves: And they only who were arriv'd at that prodigious height of impiety and wickedneſs were fit to be the executioners of this vengeance of God upon one another: As if the *Prophet* had foretold this, when he ſays, *Thine own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee.* Jer.2.19

When impiety and wickedneſs are at their higheſt pitch in a Nation, then they themſelves are the only proper inſtruments to puniſh one another. The *Romans* were by far too good and gentle to inflict a ſuffering upon the *Jews* that was equal to the evil of their doings: None but their own barbarous Selves, who were ſunk down into the very loweſt degeneracy of humane nature, were capable of ſo much cruelty and inhumanity as was requiſite to execute the Judgment of God upon them to that degree which their ſins had deſerved.

You ſee, my Brethren, by what hath been ſaid upon this Argument, what were the *Faults*, and what the *Fate* of the *Jewiſh* Nation. Now *theſe things*, as the *Apoſtle* expreſly tells us, *were written for our Admonition*, and to the intent that *we upon whom the ends of the World are come* might be inſtructed by them: *We*, I ſay, who next to the *Jewiſh* Nation ſeem to be a People highly favoured by God above all the Nations of the Earth. We reſemble them very much in their many and wonderful Deliverances, and a great deal too much in their Faults and Follies.

But as I intend it not, ſo God forbid that there ſhould be any juſt ground for a full and exact Parallel between us; Yet this I muſt ſay, that nothing ever came nearer to them than We do in ſeveral reſpects. In our fickleneſs and inconſtancy, in our murmurings and diſcontents; for we are never pleas'd with what God does, neither when he brings us into danger, nor when he delivers us out of it: We reſemble them likewiſe in our horrible prophaneneſs and infidelity, and in our impiety and wickedneſs of ſeveral kinds: in our monſtrous ingratitude and moſt unworthy returns to the God of our Salvation: and laſtly, in our Factions and Diviſions, which were the fatal ſign of God's being departed from the *Jews*, and the immediate cauſe and means of thoſe diſmal Calamities which wrought their final Ruin. And how can we chuſe but dread leſt their Fate ſhould overtake us, the Example of whoſe Faults and Follies we do in ſo many things ſo nearly reſemble?

That this may not, nor any thing like it, be our Fate, let us apply our ſelves to the great Duties of this Day; a ſerious and deep Repentance, and Humiliation of our ſelves before Almighty God for the many and heinous Sins which we in this Nation have been, and ſtill are guilty of, againſt His Divine Majeſty; by our prophaneneſs and impiety, by our lewdneſs and luxury, by our oppreſſion and injuſtice, by our implacable malice and hatred one towards another, and by our ſenſleſs diviſions and animoſities one againſt another, without cauſe and without end: By our neglect of God's Worſhip, and prophanation of his Holy Day, and by our dreadful abuſe of

God's great and glorious Name in thoſe horrid Oaths and Curſes and Imprecations which are heard almoſt day and night in the ſtreets of this great City.

For theſe and all other our innumerable provocations of the patience and goodneſs and long ſuffering of God towards us, let us ſadly repent our ſelves this Day, and *turn unto the Lord with all our hearts, with faſting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rent our hearts and not our garments, and turn unto the Lord our God; For he is gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger and of great kindneſs, and repenteth him of the evil: And who knoweth if he will return and repent and leave a bleſſing behind him? Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we ſhall be turned: Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciouſly.*

And let us earneſtly beg of Him, that he would be pleaſed to prevent thoſe terrible Judgments and Calamities which hang over us, and which our Sins have ſo juſtly deſerved ſhould fall upon us: And that He would perfect that wonderful Deliverance which he hath begun for us, and *eſtabliſh the thing which he hath wrought:* That He would bleſs *Them* whom he hath ſet in Authority over us; and particularly, that he would preſerve the Perſon of the *King* in his preſent Expedition, and crown him with victory and good ſucceſs.

And to our Repentance and Prayers let us add our liberal Alms, and according to the counſel given by the *Prophet* to *Nebuchadnezzar*, let us *break off our ſins by righteouſneſs, and our iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor, if ſo be it may be a lengthening of our tranquility.*

We are yet, bleſſed be God, in the full enjoyment of Peace and Quiet at home, and of our Religion and Civil Liberties. God hath given us two excellent Princes ſitting on the Throne together, and both of the ſame Religion with the main Body of the Nation; and as bright Examples of Piety and Goodneſs as *England* ever ſaw: And who do by all ways and means ſtudy and ſeek the good of the People committed to their charge.

So that if we did but know our own happineſs, and how to value it, we might be the happieſt People this day under Heaven: And yet for all this, we are very far from being happy; becauſe we are neither contented, nor united; and though we have all the materials of Happineſs about us, and within our reach, yet have we not the skill and wiſdom to put them together.

Miſerable People! that may be happy and will not; whom neither ſo freſh a Deliverance from ſo great a Danger as was juſt ready to have ſwallowed us up, nor the fear and apprehenſion of falling again into the like confuſion, can be a warning to us from returning again unto the ſame folly: For thoſe odious and unhappy Names of Difference which ſome years ago ſprang up among us, the Devil knows how, did ſeem whilſt a common danger threatned us, to be quite dead and buried: But no ſooner was the danger over, but by a kind of *miraculous* infatuation, behold a ſudden *Reſurrection* of them, with greater heats and animoſities, if poſſible, than before: Juſt as it was with the *Jews* in the Siege of *Jeruſalem*, when the *Romans* had made a wide breach and the City was furiouſly aſſaulted, the Factions then gave *Truce* to one another, and ran in to the common defence; but as ſoon as ever the danger was a little over, they fell on afreſh and proſecuted their main deſign of deſtroying one another.

And now that the danger is a little over with us alſo, how like a Fate upon us does it look, that we are ſo ſoon alter'd from our wiſer and better temper? Did we well and wiſely before our late happy Revolution, when we united for our common defence againſt a common danger, and did let thoſe *unlucky Names* of diſtinction fall, ſo that they ſeem'd to be quite extinguiſh'd? And can it be now wiſe to revive them, and to take them up again; when the ſame danger in ſome degree, and from the ſame implacable Enemies, ſtill hovers over us? No ſurely, it would not be wiſe, if the danger were quite paſt and over; but when it ſtill remains and threatens us, what greater folly and infatuation can there be than ſtill to divide and quarrel among our ſelves? Will nothing but ſad and bitter experience be an admonition to us? Will nothing but the laſt neceſſity and extremity of things bring us to our ſelves and teach us wiſdom?

Methinks we ſhould all now be glad to be at reſt, after the tedious troubles and diſtractions, the fruitleſs quarrels and diviſions of fifty years. So long I remember; and in all that ſpace how very few years paſs'd over us without ſome great Calamity and diſmal Event. So that by this time one would think we ſhould all be ſick of our own follies, and ſo tir'd with our unprofitable feuds and diſſentions, as to make both ſides look about them, to ſee if any body will take pity on us, and ſtep in to part our quarrels.

And now I begin to be ſenſible, that I have engag'd in a tender Point indeed; and do feel my ſelf ſtanding upon a very ſlippery place. For who is fit to interpoſe in ſuch hot and fierce differences? who can do it without danger, or with any hopes of ſucceſs? And yet for *Zion*'s ſake *I will not hold my peace*, for *Jeruſalem*'s ſake *I will not keep ſilence*: Of ſo great conſequence is it to the peace and happineſs of this Church and Nation, that theſe Names and Diſtinctions of Parties ſhould be laid down and aboliſh'd for ever.

In order whereunto I take it for granted and lay it for a Principle, that he who hopes to perſwade both ſides muſt provoke neither: And therefore I will not ſo much as enquire where the fault lyes. It is in theſe Civil Differences as in Family quarrels between Man and Wife, if any man ask on which ſide lyes the fault; one may almoſt ſafely anſwer at a venture, on both ſides. It muſt indeed begin on one, but if it be not preſently heal'd and made up, the other Party is always ſo civil as to run in and take a ſhare of the fault, that all the blame may not lye wholly on one ſide.

And now, my Brethren, let me for once perſwade and prevail with you for your good: Let me be ſo happy as to ſay ſomething that may ſink into your hearts, and incline your minds to peace and good agreement with one another, *Have ſalt in your ſelves*, ſays our *Bleſſed Saviour* the great *Peace-maker, and peace one with another*. By *Salt* is meant grace and ſpiritual wiſdom, and if *that* do but rule and ſway in our hearts, we ſhall then endeavour, *if it be poſſible, and as much as in us lyes, to live peaceably with all men*. If we *have ſalt in our ſelves*, that is, if we be wiſe, we will then certainly *have peace one with another*.

And if we were but once come to this healing temper, in this divided and diſtracted Nation, we ſhould not then need to fear *all the power of the Enemy*. And this our Enemies know full well: and therefore their chief policy and wiſdom is, and ever hath been, to divide us; and it will be our own great folly and weakneſs if we ſuffer our ſelves to be divided: For who that is wiſe will take counſel and advice from an Enemy? But if we could agree and hold together, then our *Jeruſalem* would be *as a City that is compact together*, ſtrong and impregnable.

Let us then *be inſtructed*, and *know, in this our day, things which belong to our Peace, before they be hid from our eyes*. And let us all earneſtly endeavour *and pray for the peace of* Jeruſalem: *They ſhall proſper that love her*, ſays the Pſal. 122. *Pſalmiſt*, and they do not love her, that do not ſeek her peace and endeavour by all means to procure it: *That Peace may be within her Walls, and Proſperity within her Palaces:* The one cannot be without the other: without Peace there can be no Proſperity. And to go on with the words of the *Pſalmiſt*, let every one of us ſay, yea let us all with one heart and voice ſay, *for our Brethren and Companions ſake*, for the ſake of our *Proteſtant* Brethren all the World over, let us ſay, *Peace be within thee: For the Houſe of the Lord our God*, for the ſake of our Holy Religion, and of that excellent Church whereof we all are, or ought to be Members, let every one of us ſay, *I will ſeek thy good.*

And what greater good can we do to the beſt Religion, how can we better ſerve the intereſt of it in all parts of the World, than by being at peace and unity among our ſelves, here in *England*? upon whom the eyes of all the *Proteſtants* abroad are fixed, as the Glory of the *Reformation*, and the great bulwark and ſupport of it.

That ſo under the Providence of Almighty God, and the conduct of two ſuch excellent Princes as He hath now bleſs'd us withal: The one ſo brave and valiant, and Both of them ſo wiſe, ſo good, ſo religious, we may at laſt arrive at a firm eſtabliſhment, and become *like mount* Zion *that cannot* be moved; the perfection of Beauty and Strength, and the admiration and *joy of the whole Earth*; which God of his infinite goodneſs grant, for his mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt:* To whom, with thee O Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, thankſgiving and praiſe both now and ever, *Amen.*

SERMON XXXVIII.

A Conſcience void of Offence towards God and Men.

Preached before the
QUEEN
AT
WHITEHALL,
February the 27th 169$^{0}_{1}$.

ACTS XXIV. 16.

And herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a Conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards Men.

THeſe words are part of the Defence which St. *Paul* made for himſelf, before *Fælix* the *Roman* Governour.

In which he firſt of all vindicates himſelf from the charge of Sedition, *verſ.* 12. *They neither found me in the Temple, diſputing with any man; neither raiſing up the People, neither in the Synagogue, nor in the City*; that is, they could not charge him with making any diſturbance either in Church or State.

After this, he makes a free and open profeſſion of his Religion, *verſ.* 14. *But this I confeſs, that after the way which they call Hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets*: Here he declares the *Scriptures* to be the *Rule* of his *Faith*, in oppoſition to the *Oral Tradition* of the *Phariſees*.

More particularly he aſſerts the Doctrine of the *Reſurrection*, which was a principal *Article* both of the *Jewiſh* and the *Chriſtian* Religion; *verſ.* 15. *And I have hope alſo towards God, that there ſhall be a Reſurrection, both of the juſt and the unjuſt.*

And having made this declaration of his *Faith*, he gives an account of his *Life*, in the words of the *Text*, *verſ.* 16. *And herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a Conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards Men.*

Herein, ἐν τούτῳ, that is, *in this work,* do I employ my ſelf; or as others render it, *in the mean time,* whilſt I am in this World; or as others, I think moſt probably, *for this cauſe and reaſon*, ἐν τούτῳ, for διὰ τοῦτο, for this reaſon, becauſe I believe a Reſurrection, therefore have I a conſcientious care of my life, and all the actions of it.

The Diſcourſe I intend to make upon theſe words, ſhall be compriſed in theſe following Particulars.

I. Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice, *to have a conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards men.*

II. Here is his conſtancy and perſeverance in this courſe; to have *always* a conſcience void of offence.

III. Here is his earneſt care and endeavour to this purpoſe, *I exerciſe my ſelf.*

IV. Here is the principle and immediate Guide of his Actions, which St. *Paul* here tells us was his *Conſcience.*

V. I ſhall lay down ſome Rules and Directions for the keeping of a good Conſcience.

VI. Here is the great motive and encouragement to this, which St. *Paul* tells us was the belief of a Reſurrection, and of a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments conſequent upon it; *for this cauſe*; becauſe *I hope for a Reſurrection both of the juſt and unjuſt, I exerciſe my ſelf to have always a conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* I ſhall ſpeak but briefly to the *three* firſt of theſe Particulars, that I may be larger in the reſt.

I. I. *Here is the extent of a good man's pious practice.* It hath regard to the whole compaſs of his Duty, as it reſpects *God* and *Man.* *I exerciſe my ſelf,* ſays St. *Paul*, *to have a conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.* And this diſtribution of our Duty, under theſe two general Heads, is very frequent in Scripture. The *Decalogue* refers our Duty to thoſe two Heads: And accordingly our Saviour comprehends the whole Duty of Man in thoſe two great Commandments, the *love* of *God* and of our *Neighbour*, *Matth.* 22. 38. *Upon theſe two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets,* that is, all the *Moral* Precepts, which are diſpers'd up and down in the Law and the Prophets, may be referr'd to theſe two general Heads.

II. II. *Here is his conſtancy and perſeverance in this courſe.* St. *Paul* ſays, that he exerciſed himſelf to have *always* a conſcience void of offence; διαπαντὸς, *continually*, at all times, in the whole courſe of his life. We muſt not only make conſcience of our ways by fits and ſtarts, but in the general courſe and tenour of our lives and actions, without any balks and intermiſſions.

There are ſome that will refrain from groſſer Sins, and be very ſtrict at ſome Seaſons; as during the Time of a Solemn Repentance, and for ſome days before they receive the Sacrament; and perhaps for a little while after it: And when theſe devout Seaſons are over, they let themſelves looſe again to their former lewd and vitious courſe: But Religion ſhould be a conſtant frame and temper of mind, diſcovering it ſelf in the habitual courſe of our lives and actions.

III. III. *Here is likewiſe a very earneſt care and endeavour to this purpoſe.* Herein do I *exerciſe* my ſelf, ſays St. *Paul.* The word ἀσκῶ, which is here render'd *exerciſe*, is a word of a very intenſe ſignification, and does denote that St. *Paul* applied himſelf to this buſineſs with all his care and might, and that he made it his earneſt ſtudy and endeavour: And ſo muſt we; we muſt take great care to underſtand our duty, and to be rightly informed concerning *good* and *evil*, that we may not miſtake the nature of things, and *call good evil, and evil good*: We muſt apply our minds in good earneſt to be throughly inſtructed in all the parts of our Duty, that ſo we may not be at a loſs what to do when we are call'd to the practice of it. And when we know our Duty, we muſt be true and honeſt to our ſelves, and very careful and conſcientious in the diſcharge and performance of it. I proceed in the

IVth Place to conſider *the principle and immediate Guide of our Actions*, which St. *Paul* here tells us was his *Conſcience*; *I exerciſe my ſelf to have always a conſcience void of offence*: By which he does not only mean a reſolution to follow the dictate and direction of his Conſcience, but likewiſe a due care to inform his Conſcience aright, that he might not in any thing tranſgreſs the Law of God, and his Duty. IV.

Conſcience is the great Principle of moral Actions, and our Guide in matter of Sin and Duty. It is not the Law and Rule of our Actions, *that* the Law of God only is; but it is our immediate Guide and Director, telling us what is the Law of God and our Duty.

But becauſe *Conſcience* is a word of a very large and various ſignification, I ſhall endeavour very briefly to give you the true notion of it. Now in common ſpeech concerning *Conſcience*, every man is repreſented as having a kind of *Court* and *Tribunal* in his own breaſt, where he tries himſelf and all his Actions: And *Conſcience*, under one Notion or other, ſuſtains all parts in this Trial: The *Court* is call'd the *Court* of a man's *Conſcience*, and the *Barr* at which the Sinner ſtands impleaded, is call'd the *Barr* of *Conſcience*: *Conſcience* alſo is the *Accuſer*; and it is the *Record* and *Regiſter* of our Crimes, in which the memory of them is preſerv'd: And it is the *Witneſs* which gives teſtimony for, or againſt us; hence are thoſe expreſſions of *the teſtimony of our Conſciences*, and that *a man's own Conſcience is to him inſtead of a thouſand Witneſſes*: And it is likewiſe the *Judge* which declares the Law, and what we ought, or ought not to have done, in ſuch or ſuch a Caſe, and accordingly paſſeth *Sentence* upon us by *acquitting* or *condemning* us. Thus, according to common uſe of Speech, *Conſcience* ſuſtains all imaginable parts in this *Spiritual Court*: It is the *Court*, and the *Bench*, and the *Barr*; the *Accuſer*, and *Witneſs*, and *Regiſter*, and all.

But I ſhall only at preſent conſider *Conſcience* in the moſt common and famous Notion of it, as it is the Principle or Faculty whereby we judge of moral Good and Evil, and do accordingly direct and govern our Actions: So that in ſhort, *Conſcience* is nothing elſe but *the Judgment of a man's own mind concerning the morality of his actions*; that is, the *Good*, or *Evil*, or *Indifferency* of them; telling us what things are commanded by God, and conſequently are our *Duty*; what things are forbidden by Him, and conſequently are *ſinful*; what things are neither commanded nor forbidden, and conſequently are *indifferent*. I proceed in the

V^th Place, *to give ſome Rules and Directions for the keeping of a conſcience void of offence*. And they ſhall be theſe following: V.

Firſt, Never in any caſe to act contrary to the perſwaſion and conviction of our Conſcience. For *that* certainly is a great Sin, and that which properly offends the Conſcience and renders us *guilty*; *guilt* being nothing elſe but trouble ariſing in our minds from a conſciouſneſs of having done contrary to what we are verily perſwaded was our Duty : And though perhaps this perſwaſion is not always well grounded, yet the guilt is the ſame ſo long as this perſwaſion continues; becauſe every man's Conſcience is a kind of God to him, and accuſeth or abſolves him according to the preſent perſwaſion of it. And therefore we ought to take great care not to offend againſt the light and conviction of our own mind.

Secondly, We ſhould be very careful to inform our Conſciences aright, that we may not miſtake concerning our Duty; or if we do, that our errour and miſtake may not be groſly wilful and faulty.

And this Rule is the more neceſſary to be conſider'd and regarded by us, becauſe generally men are apt to think it a ſufficient excuſe for any thing, that they did it according to their Conſcience. But this will appear to be a dangerous miſtake, and of very pernicious conſequence to the Souls of men, if we conſider theſe two things.

1*ſt*, That men may be guilty of the moſt heinous Sins in following an erroneous Conſcience.

2*ly*, And theſe Sins may prove damnable without a particular repentance for them.

1*ſt*, *That men may be guilty of the moſt heinous Sins, in following an erroneous*
Conſcience. Men may neglect and abuſe themſelves ſo far, as to do ſome
of the worſt and wickedeſt things in the World with a perſwaſion that they do
John 16.2. well. Our *Saviour* tells his Diſciples that *the time ſhould come* when the
Jews ſhould *put them to death, thinking they did God good ſervice :* Nay the
Jews murthered the Son of God himſelf through ignorance and a falſe per-
Luk.23.34 ſwaſion of mind : *Father, forgive them*, ſays our *Bleſſed Lord*, when he
was breathing out his Soul upon the Croſs, *for they know not what they do.*
Acts 3.17. And St. *Peter*, after he had charged the *Jews* with *killing the Prince of*
Life, he preſently adds, *I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did alſo*
your Rulers. And St. *Paul*, in mitigation of that great Crime, ſays, *Had*
they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Life and Glory : And
Acts 26.9. concerning himſelf he tells us, *That he verily thought with himſelf, that he*
ought to do many things againſt the Name of Jeſus *of* Nazareth : And yet not-
withſtanding that he acted herein according to the perſwaſion of his Conſci-
ence, he tells us that he had been *a blaſphemer*, and *a perſecutor*, and *injuri-*
ous, and *a murtherer*, and in a word, *the greateſt of Sinners.* So that men
may be guilty of the greateſt Sins in following an erroneous Conſcience.
And,

2ly, *Theſe ſins may prove damnable, without a particular repentance for them.* Where the ignorance and miſtake is not groſly wilful, there God will accept of a general repentance ; but where it is groſly wilful, great Sins committed upon it are not pardon'd without a particular Repentance for them : And an errour which proceeds from want of ordinary humane Care and due Government of a man's ſelf, is in a great degree wilful : As when it proceeds from an unreaſonable and obſtinate prejudice, from great pride and ſelf-conceit, and contempt of counſel and inſtruction ; or from a viſible byaſs of ſelf-intereſt, or when it is accompanied with a furious paſſion and zeal, prompting men to cruel and horrible things, contrary to the light of nature and the common ſenſe of humanity : An errour proceeding from ſuch cauſes, and producing ſuch effects, is wilful in ſo high a degree, that whatever evil is done in vertue of it is almoſt equally faulty with a direct and wilful violation of the law of God.

The ignorance and miſtake doth indeed make the perſon ſo miſtaken more capable of forgiveneſs, which is the ground of our *Saviour's* Prayer for his Murtherers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*: St. *Paul* likewiſe tells us, that he found mercy upon this account, *Nevertheleſs*, ſays he, *I obtained mercy, becauſe I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief*, that is, through a falſe perſwaſion of mind, not believing it to be a Sin: 1 Tim. 1. 13. And yet he did not obtain this mercy, without a particular conviction of his fault and repentance for it. And St. *Peter* after he had convinced the *Jews* of their great Sin in crucifying *Chriſt*, though they did it ignorantly, yet he exhorts them to a particular and deep repentance for it, as neceſſary to the pardon and forgiveneſs of it: And therefore after he had ſaid, *I wote that through ignorance ye did it, as did alſo your Rulers*; he immediately adds, *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out.* Acts 3. 19.

So that it highly concerns men to conſider what opinions they embrace in order to practice, and not to ſuffer themſelves to be hurried away by an unreaſonable prejudice and a heady paſſion, without a due and calm examination of things, nor to be over-born by pride, or humour, or partiality, or intereſt, or by a furious and extravagant zeal: Becauſe proportionably to the voluntarineſs of our Errour will be the guilt of our practice purſuant to that Errour. Indeed where our Errour is involuntary, and morally invincible, God will conſider it, and make allowance for it; but where it is voluntary, and occaſioned by our own groſs faults and neglect, we are bound to conſider, and to rectifie our miſtake: For whatever we do contrary to the Law of God and our Duty, in vertue of that falſe perſwaſion, we do it at our utmoſt peril, and muſt be anſwerable to God for it, notwithſtanding we did it according to the dictate of our Conſcience.

A *Third* Rule is this, that in all doubts of Conſcience we endeavour to be equal and impartial, and do not lay all the weight of our doubts on one ſide, when there is perhaps as much or greater reaſon of doubting on the other: And conſequently, that we be as tractable and eaſie to receive ſatiſfaction of our doubts in one kind as in another, and be equally contented to have them over-ruled in Caſes that are equal: I mean, where our Paſſions and Intereſts are not concern'd, as well as where they are. And if we do not do this, it is a ſign that we are partial in our pretences of Conſcience, and that we do not aim meerly at the peace and ſatisfaction of our own minds, but have ſome other intereſt and deſign.

For it is a very ſuſpicious thing, when men's doubts and ſcruples bear all on one ſide, eſpecially if it be on that ſide which is againſt Charity, and Peace, and Obedience to Government, whether Eccleſiaſtical or Civil: In this caſe I think that a meer doubt, and much more a ſcruple, may, nay, ought in reaſon to be over-ruled by the Command of Authority, by the opinion and judgment of wiſe and good men, and in conſideration of the publick Peace, and of the unity and edification of the Church.

Not that a man is in any caſe to go againſt the clear perſwaſion and conviction of his own mind, but when there is only a meer doubt concerning the lawfulneſs or unlawfulneſs of a thing, it ſeems to me in that caſe very reaſonable that a man ſhould ſuffer a mere doubt or ſcruple to be over-rul'd by any of thoſe weighty conſiderations which I mention'd before.

The *Fourth* Rule is, that all pretences of Conſcience are vehemently to be ſuſpected, which are accompanied with turbulent paſſion and a furious zeal. It is an hundred to one but ſuch a man's Conſcience is in the wrong. It is an excellent ſaying of St. *James*, *The wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*, that is, the fierce paſſions of men are no proper inſtruments Jam. 1. 20.

ments to promote Religion, and to accompliſh any thing that is good. And therefore if any man be tranſported with a wild zeal, and pretend conſcience for his fury, it is great odds but he is in an errour: None are ſo likely to judge amiſs, as they whoſe minds are clouded and blinded by their paſſions,

Boeth.

Nubila mens eſt,
Hæc ubi regnant.

And if men would carefully obſerve themſelves, they might almoſt certainly know when they act upon Reaſon and a true Principle of Conſcience. A good Conſcience is eaſie to it ſelf, and pleaſed with its own doings; but when a man's paſſion and diſcontent are a weight upon his judgment, and do, as it were, bear down his Conſcience to a compliance, no wonder if this puts a man's mind into a very unnatural and uneaſie ſtate.

There can hardly be a broader ſign that a man is in the wrong, than to *rage and be confident:* Becauſe this plainly ſhews that the man's Conſcience is not ſettled upon clear reaſon, but that he hath brought over his Conſcience to his intereſt, or to his humour and diſcontent.

And though ſuch a man may be ſo far blinded by his paſſion as not to *ſee* what is right, yet methinks he ſhould *feel* himſelf to be in the wrong by his being ſo very hot and impatient.

Art thou ſure thou art in the right? thou art a happy man, and haſt reaſon to be pleaſed: What cauſe then, what need is there of being angry? Hath a man Reaſon on his ſide? What would he have more? Why then does he fly out into paſſion? which as it gives no ſtrength to a bad argument, ſo I could never yet ſee that it was any grace and advantage to a good one.

Of the great evil, and the perpetual miſtake of this furious kind of Zeal, the *Jews* are a lively and a lamentable Example, in their carriage towards our Bleſſed *Saviour* and his Apoſtles: And more particularly St. *Paul,* when he perſecuted the *Chriſtians* from a falſe and erroneous perſwaſion of his Conſcience. Hear how St. *Paul* deſcribes himſelf and his own doings whilſt he was acted by an erroneous Conſcience: *I perſecuted,* ſays he, *this way unto the death, binding and delivering into priſon both men and women:* And in another *Chapter, I verily thought with my ſelf, that I ought to do many things againſt the Name of* Jeſus *of* Nazareth: Here was his erroneous Conſcience. Let us next ſee what were the unhappy concomitants and effects of it; *verſ.* 10, 11. *Which things,* ſays he, *I alſo did in* Jeruſalem, *and many of the Saints I ſhut up in priſon, and when they were put to death I gave my voice againſt them, and puniſh'd them oft in every Synagogue, and compell'd them to blaſpheme; and being exceedingly mad againſt them, I perſecuted them even to ſtrange Cities.* When Conſcience tranſports men with ſuch a furious zeal and paſſion, it is hardly ever in the right; or if it ſhould happen to be ſo, they who are thus tranſported, by their ungracious way of maintaining the truth, and their ill management of a good cauſe, have found out a cunning way to be in the wrong, even when they are in the right.

Acts 22. 4.

Acts 26. 9.

Fifthly, All pretences of Conſcience are likewiſe to be ſuſpected, which are not accompanied with modeſty and humility, and a teachable temper and diſpoſition, willing to learn and to be better inform'd. A proud and conceited temper of mind is very likely to run into miſtakes; becauſe pride and fulneſs of a man's ſelf does keep out knowledge, and obſtructs all the paſſages by which wiſdom and inſtruction ſhould enter into men: Beſides that it provokes God to abandon men to their own follies and miſtakes; for *God reſiſteth the proud,* but *the meek will he guide in judgment,* and *will*

will give more grace and wiſdom *to the humble.* When men are once come to this, to think themſelves wiſer than their Teachers, and to deſpiſe and caſt off their Guides, no wonder if *then* they go aſtray.

Laſtly, Let us be ſure to mind that which is our plain and unqueſtionable Duty: the great things of Religion, wherein the life and ſubſtance of it doth conſiſt; and *the things* likewiſe *which make for peace, and whereby we may edifie one another*: And let us not ſuffer our Diſputes about leſſer matters to prejudice and hinder our main duty: But let it be our great care not to fail in thoſe greater things which are comprehended under the *two great Commandments of the Law*, the *Love* of *God* and of our *Neighbour*: Let us be ſtrict and conſtant in our piety and devotion towards *God*; chaſt and temperate in reference to *our ſelves*; juſt and honeſt, kind and charitable, humble and meek, patient and peaceable towards *all men*; ſubmiſſive and obedient to our *Superiours*, *Natural*, *Civil*, and *Spiritual*. A due regard to theſe great Vertues of the *Chriſtian* life is the way to *keep a conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards men*: And ſurely the beſt means to have our doubts cleared about matters of leſſer moment in Religion, is heartily to ſet about the practice of the great and unqueſtionable Duties of it: So our *Bleſſed Saviour* hath aſſur'd us, that *if any man will do the* John 7.17
will of God, he ſhall know of his *Doctrine whether it be of God.* I come now in the

VIth and *Laſt* place, to *conſider the great Motive and encouragement to* VI.
this conſcientious care of our Lives and Actions; which St. *Paul* here tells us was his belief of a *Reſurrection*, and of the Rewards and Puniſhments conſequent upon it; *I have hope*, ſays he, *towards God, that there ſhall be a Reſurrection both of the juſt and unjuſt: For this cauſe* therefore *I exerciſe my ſelf to have always a conſcience void of offence, toward God, and toward men.*

If we believe *the Reſurrection of the dead*, and *a future Judgment*, we ought to be very careful to diſcharge a good Conſcience *now*, in order to the rendring of a good *Account* hereafter; that *we may be ſincere and without offence, with reſpect to the day of Chriſt*, as the *Apoſtle* expreſſeth it. For when that great Day of Recompences ſhall come, we ſhall moſt aſſuredly find that nothing will *then* raiſe our hearts, and make us to lift up our heads with joy, like the witneſs of a good Conſcience: And therefore we ſhould make that our conſtant care and companion *now*, which will *then* be our great comfort and rejoycing, a good Conſcience and *the teſtimony* of it, *that in all ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation in the world.*

And on the contrary, when we come to appear before the Great Judge of the World, nothing will fill our minds with ſo much terrour, and our faces with ſo much confuſion, as the clamorous accuſations of a guilty Conſcience; which will be *more than a thouſand witneſſes* againſt us, and will anticipate our condemnation, and paſs almoſt as ſevere a Sentence upon us as the Judge himſelf can.

This is that which will make the ſinner to droop, and to hang down his head for ever: And one of the principal ingredients of his miſery and torment will be the perpetual regret and remorſe of his own mind for his wilful wickedneſs and folly, which will kindle a fire within him as hot as that without him, and as hard to be quench'd.

This conſideration ought to have a mighty Operation upon us to make us very careful to have Conſciences void of offence *now*, that they may be free from torment and anguiſh *hereafter*: That when we ſhall come into the other World, we may not be eternally diſpleas'd with our ſelves, and enrag'd at our own doings; but may carry with us thither Conſciences clear of all guilt, either by Innocency, or by Repentance.

The firm belief of a future ſtate of eternal Happineſs or Miſery in another World, is the great Weight or Spring that ſets a going thoſe two powerful Principles of Humane Activity, the Hopes and the Fears of men; and is in its Nature ſo fitted to raiſe theſe Paſſions to that degree, that did not experience ſhew us the contrary, one would think it morally impoſſible for humane Nature to reſiſt the mighty force of it.

All men are ſenſible, more or leſs, at one time or other, of the true force of theſe Arguments; but the miſchief is, that in ſome perſons they work quite the wrong way, and inſtead of leading men to Repentance, they drive them to Infidelity: They cannot deny the force of theſe Arguments, if they were true; but that they may avoid the force of them, they will not believe them to be true: And ſo far they are in the right, that granting theſe things to be true, they cannot but acknowledge that they ought to live otherwiſe than they do: But here is their fatal miſcarriage, that being reſolved upon an evil courſe, ſince they cannot reconcile their practice with ſuch Principles as theſe, they will fit their Principles to their practice; and ſo they will believe nothing at all of the Rewards and Puniſhments of another World, leſt this ſhould diſturb them in their courſe? Vain men! as if Heaven and Hell muſt needs vaniſh and diſappear, becauſe ſome witty but wicked men have no mind to believe them.

Theſe men are Infidels in their own defence, and merely for the quiet of their own minds; that their Conſciences may not perpetually rate them, and fly in their faces. For a right Belief and an evil Conſcience are but unſuitable Companions; they are quarrelſome Neighbours, and muſt needs live very uneaſily by one another. He that believes the Principles of Religion, and yet is conſcious to himſelf that he hath liv'd contrary to them, and ſtill continues to do ſo, how can he poſſibly have any peace and quiet in his mind? unleſs like *Jonah* he can ſleep in a ſtorm, and his *Conſcience* be, as it were, *ſeared with a hot iron:* For if his Conſcience be awake, and in any degree ſenſible, the evident danger of eternal ruine, continually hanging over him, muſt in reaſon either drive him to repentance or to deſpair: If ſo forcible and violent an Argument can make no impreſſion upon us, we are ſtupid and bewitch'd, we are loſt and undone, we are wretched and miſerable for ever.

But beſides the future Reward of a holy and conſcientious courſe, which is *unſpeakable and full of* glory; it hath alſo this preſent fruit, this *earneſt*, as I may ſay, and ready mony in hand, the peace and ſatisfaction of our own minds, which is much more valuable *than thouſands of gold and ſilver*; the unſpeakable comfort whereof every man will then find, when he hath moſt need of it: For it will be matter of great joy to him, not only under the soreſt afflictions and calamities of Life, but even at the hour of Death; when the miſeries of life oppreſs him, and the ſorrows of death compaſs him about, and the pangs of it are ready to take hold of him.

There is certainly no ſuch comfort under the evils and afflictions of this life, as a faithful witneſs in our breaſts of our own innocency and integrity: When we are afflicted by God, or perſecuted and revil'd by men, it cannot but be a mighty conſolation to us to be conſcious to our ſelves of our own ſincerity. For though no man can acquit and juſtifie himſelf before God as to the perfect innocency of his life, in which ſence St. *Paul* ſays, that *though he knew nothing by himſelf, yet was he not thereby juſtified*; I ſay, though no man can plead perfect innocency, yet as to the general courſe and tenour of an unblameable life, a good man may appeal to God, and even when he af- 1 Cor. 4. 4.

flicts him, may look upon him as a tender and compaſſionate Father, and not as an angry and revengeful Judge.

With this, holy and patient *Job*, under all thoſe terrible diſaſters and calamities which befel him, was able in ſome meaſure to comfort himſelf: After he had loſt all, and he had a great deal to loſe; when he was forſaken of all other comfort, even the charitable opinion of his beſt Friends concerning his ſincerity. In theſe ſad and diſconſolate circumſtances, what was it that bore up his ſpirit? nothing but the conſcience of his own integrity. See with what reſolution and conſtancy of mind he aſſerts and maintains it: *I will not*, ſays he, *remove mine integrity from me: my righteouſneſs will I hold faſt, and will not let it go: mine heart ſhall not reproach me, ſo long as I live:* You ſee, that when every thing elſe was gone, his integrity ſtuck by him, and ſupported him to the laſt. Job 25.5,6

And as to perſecutions and ſufferings from men, our own innocency, and the goodneſs of our Cauſe, will be our beſt comfort under them: When we are not guilty to our ſelves that we have deſerv'd them from men, and are inwardly aſſur'd that whatever we patiently ſuffer for God and a good Conſcience, will all turn to our account another Day, and *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

This was *that* which ſupported the firſt *Chriſtians*, that *noble Army of Martyrs*, under all thoſe bitter and cruel perſecutions, which had otherwiſe been beyond all humane patience to have endur'd: This comforted them in all their tribulations; *Our rejoycing*, ſays St. *Paul*, *is this*, *the teſtimony of our conſciences*, *that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity*, *we have had our converſation in the world.*

So likewiſe under that inferiour but equally malicious ſort of perſecution, of which this Age is ſo very profuſe and prodigal, I mean the cauſeleſs Calumnies and Reproaches of Men: If under theſe we can but approve our Conſciences to God, the uncharitable Cenſures of men are not ſo much to be regarded by us: ſome impreſſion they will make upon a tender mind, but we muſt not, if we can help it, let them ſink too deep into our ſpirits: *If our hearts condemn us not*, *we may have confidence towards God;* and then ſurely much more towards *men:* If God and our own Conſciences do but acquit us, methinks it ſhould be no ſuch difficult matter to bear the ſlanders and hard cenſures of men. 1 Joh. 3.21

But above all other times, the comfort of a good Conſcience is moſt ſenſible, and moſt conſiderable, at the hour of Death: For as nothing dejects a man's ſpirit more, and ſends him down with ſo much ſorrow to the Grave, as the guilt of an evil Conſcience; what terrour and anguiſh, what rage and deſpair do ſeize upon a Sinner at that time, when he reflects upon what he hath done, and conſiders what he is like to ſuffer? So on the other hand, there is nothing that revives and raiſes the fainting ſpirits of a dying man, like the Conſcience of a holy and uſeful life, which hath brought glory to God, and good to men. *The wicked*, ſays *Solomon*, *is driven away in his wickedneſs*, that is, he is carried out of the World, as it were, in a ſtorm and tempeſt: *But the righteous hath hope in his death*; he uſually dies calmly and comfortably: *Mark the perfect man*, ſays *David*, *and behold the upright*; *for the end of that man is peace.* Pro. 14.32. Pſal. 37.37.

If a man be conſcious to himſelf that he hath ſincerely endeavour'd to keep the Commandments of God, and to do the things which pleaſe Him; if he hath *lived* inoffenſively, and, as St. *Paul* ſays of himſelf, *in all good conſcience before God and men;* what an unſpeakable conſolation muſt it be to him, in that dark and gloomy time, and when he is *walking through the* Acts 23. 1.

valley of the ſhadow of death, then *to fear no evil?* and to be able with our *Bleſſed Saviour* to ſay, though in a much inferiour meaſure and degree, John 17.4. *Father, I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finiſhed the work which thou haſt given me to do:* And to be able to look Death in the face with the like courage and conſtancy of mind as St. *Paul* did when he ſaw it approaching towards 2 Tim. 4. 6,7,8. him: *I am now,* ſays he, *ready to be offer'd, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good fight, I have finiſh'd my race, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me at that day.* A comfortable Death, that is free from the ſtings and upbraidings, the terrours and tortures, the confuſion and amazement of a guilty Conſcience, is a happineſs ſo deſirable, as to be well worth the beſt care and endeavour of a man's whole life.

Let us then have a conſcientious regard to the whole compaſs of our Duty, and with St. *Paul, Let us exerciſe our ſelves to have always a Conſcience void of offence, towards God, and towards Men:* And let us never do any thing whereby we ſhall offer violence to the light of our minds. God hath given us this Principle to be our conſtant guide, and companion; and whoever, after due care to inform himſelf aright, does ſincerely follow the dictate and direction of this Guide, ſhall never fatally miſcarry: But whoever goes againſt the clear dictate and conviction of his Conſcience, in ſo doing he undermines the foundation of his own comfort and peace, and ſins againſt God and his own Soul.

And to the end we may keep our Conſciences clear of guilt, we ſhould frequently examine our ſelves, and look back upon the actions of our lives, and call our ſelves to a ſtrict account for them; that wherein ſoever we have fail'd of innocency, we may make it up by repentance; and may get our Conſciences clear'd of guilt by pardon and forgiveneſs: And if we do not do this, we cannot with confidence rely upon the teſtimony of our Conſciences; becauſe many great Sins may ſlip out of our memories without a particular repentance for them, which yet do require and ſtand in need of a particular repentance.

Eſpecially, we ſhould ſearch our Conſciences more narrowly at theſe more ſolemn Times of Repentance, and when we are preparing our ſelves to receive the Holy Sacrament: And if at theſe Times our hearts do accuſe and condemn us for any thing, we ſhould not only heartily lament and bewail it before God, but ſincerely reſolve by God's Grace to reform in that particular, and from that time to break off that Sin which we have then repented of, and have ask'd forgiveneſs of God for: For if after we have repented of it, we return to it again, we wound our Conſciences afreſh, and involve them in a new guilt.

In the laſt place, We ſhould reverence our Conſciences, and ſtand in awe of them, and have a great regard to their teſtimony and verdict: For Conſcience is a Domeſtick Judge, and a kind of familiar God: And therefore, next to the Supreme Majeſty of Heaven and Earth, every man ſhould be afraid to offend his own Reaſon and Conſcience, which whenever we knowingly do amiſs, will beat us with many ſtripes, and handle us more ſeverely than the greateſt Enemy we have in the World: So that next to the dreadful Sentence of the great Day, every man hath reaſon to dread the Sentence of his own Conſcience. *God indeed is greater then our hearts, and knows all things;* but under Him we have the greateſt reaſon to fear the judgment of our own Conſciences: For nothing but that can give us Comfort, and nothing can create ſo much trouble and diſquiet to us.

And though the judgment of our Conſciences be not always the judgment of God, yet we have great reaſon to have great regard to it; and that upon ſeveral Accounts, which I ſhall but briefly mention, and ſo conclude.

Firſt, Becauſe the judgment of our Conſcience is free from any compulſion. No body can force it from us, whether we will or no; and make us to paſs ſentence againſt our ſelves, whether we ſee reaſon for it or not.

Secondly, The ſentence of our own Conſciences is very likely to be impartial, at leaſt not too hard on the ſevere ſide; becauſe men naturally love themſelves, and are too apt to be favourable in their own caſe: All the World cannot bribe a man againſt himſelf: There is no man whoſe mind is not either diſtemper'd by melancholy, or deluded by falſe Principles, that is apt to be credulous againſt himſelf, and his own intereſt and peace.

Thirdly, The judgment which our Conſcience paſſeth upon our own Actions, is upon the moſt intimate and certain knowledge of them, and of their true motives and ends. We may eaſily be deceiv'd in our judgment of the Actions of other men, and may think them to be much better or worſe than in truth they are: Becauſe we cannot certainly tell with what mind they were done, and what circumſtances there may be to excuſe or aggravate them; how ſtrong the temptation was, or how weak the judgment of him that was ſeduc'd by it into errour and folly.

But we are conſcious to all the ſecret ſprings, and motives, and circumſtances of our own Actions: We can deſcend into our own hearts, and dive to the bottom of them, and ſearch into the moſt retired corners of our intentions and ends; which none, beſides our ſelves, but only God can do; for excepting *Him* only, *none knows the things of a man but the ſpirit of a man which is in him.*

Fourthly, The Sentence of our Conſcience is peremptory and inexorable, and there is no way to avoid it. Thou maiſt poſſibly fly from the wrath of other men to the uttermoſt parts of the Earth, but thou canſt not ſtir one ſtep from thy ſelf: In vain ſhalt thou call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on thee and hide thee from the ſight of thine own Conſcience.

Wrethed and miſerable man! when thou haſt offended and wounded thy Conſcience: For whither canſt thou go, to eſcape the eye of this Witneſs, the terror of this Judge, the torment of this Executioner? A man may as ſoon get rid of himſelf, and quit his own being, as fly from the ſharp Accuſations and ſtinging Guilt of his own Conſcience; which will perpetually haunt him, till it be done away by repentance and forgiveneſs.

We account it a fearful thing to be haunted by evil Spirits, and yet the Spirit of a man which is in him, throughly affrighted with its own Guilt, may be a more ghaſtly and amazing Spectacle than all the Devils in Hell: There is no ſuch frightful Apparition in the World, as a man's own guilty and terrified Conſcience ſtaring him in the face: *A ſpirit* that is thus *wounded*, *who can bear?*

To conclude; Let theſe conſiderations prevail with us always to live, not with regard to the opinion of others, which may be grounded upon miſtake, or may not indeed be their opinion, but their flattery; but with regard to the judgment of our own Conſcience, which though it may ſometimes be miſtaken, can never be brib'd and corrupted: We may be hypocrites to others and baſe flatterers, but our Conſciences whenever they are throughly awaken'd are always ſincere, and deal truly with us, and ſpeak to us as they think.

Therefore whatever we ſay or do, let it be ſincere? For though hypocriſie may for a while preſerve our eſteem and reputation with others, yet it can ſignifie nothing to the peace of our own minds: And then what will it avail us to conceal any thing from other men, when we can hide nothing that we ſay or do from our own Conſciences?

The Sum of all is this: If we would keep a Conſcience void of offence, let us always be calm and conſiderate, and have the patience to examine things throughly and impartially: Let us be humble and willing to learn, and never too proud and ſtiff to be better inform'd: Let us do what we can to free our ſelves from prejudice and paſſion, from ſelf-conceit and ſelf-intereſt, which are often too ſtrong a byaſs upon the Judgments of the beſt men, as we may ſee every day in very ſad and melancholy inſtances: And having taken all due care to inform our Conſciences a-right, let us follow the judgment of our minds in what we do; and then we have done what we can to pleaſe God.

And if we would always take this care to keep a good Conſcience, we ſhould always be eaſie, and good company to our ſelves: But if we offend our Conſciences, by doing contrary to the clear dictate and conviction of them, we make the unhappieſt breach in the World; we ſtir up a quarrel in our own breaſts, and arm our own minds againſt our ſelves; we create an enemy to our ſelves in our own boſoms, and fall out with the beſt and moſt inſeparable Companion of our lives.

And on the contrary, *a good Conſcience* will be *a continual Feaſt*, and will give us that comfort and courage in an evil day which nothing elſe can: And then whatever happen to us, we may *commit our ſouls to God in well-doing, as into the hands of a faithful Creatour*, To whom with our *Bleſſed Saviour* and *Redeemer*, and the *Holy Ghoſt* the *Comforter*, be all honour and glory, now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XXXIX.

How to keep a truly Religious Faſt.

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITEHALL,

September the 16th. 1691.

ZECH. VII. 5.

Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Prieſts, ſaying, When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even thoſe ſeventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, EVEN UNTO ME?

IN the beginning of this *Chapter* the People of the *Jews*, who were then rebuilding the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, and had already far advanced the work, though it was not perfectly finiſh'd till about two years after, ſend to the *Prieſts* and the *Prophets*, to enquire of them, whether they ſhould ſtill continue the *Faſt* of the *fifth* Month, which they had begun in *Babylon* and continued to obſerve during the ſeventy Years of their Captivity, in a ſad remembrance of the deſtruction of the City and Temple of *Jeruſalem*; or ſhould not now rather turn it into a Day of Feaſting and Gladneſs?

To this enquiry God by his Prophet returns an Anſwer in this, and the following *Chapter*. And firſt he expoſtulates with them concerning thoſe their monthly Faſts, whether they did indeed deſerve that name, and were not rather a mere ſhew and pretence of a Religious Faſt, *verſ.* 4, 5. *Then came the word of the Lord of Hoſts unto me, ſaying; Speak unto all the People of the Land, and to the Prieſts, ſaying, When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh month, even thoſe ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* The enquiry was particularly concerning the *Faſt* of the *fifth* Month, becauſe the occaſion of that was more conſiderable than of all the other; but the Anſwer of God mentions the *Faſts* of the *fifth* and *ſeventh* Months, theſe two being probably obſerv'd with greater ſolemnity than the other.

But for our clearer underſtanding of this, it will be requiſite to conſider the original and occaſion of all their *monthly Faſts:* which as appears from other places of Scripture, in ſhort, was this: When the *Jews* were carried away Captive into *Babylon*, in a deep ſenſe of this great Judgment of God upon them for their Sins, and of the heavy affliction which they lay under, they appointed *four annual Faſts*, which they obſerved during their ſeventy years Captivity, *viz.* the *Faſt* of the *fourth* Month, in remembrance of the Enemies breaking through the Wall of *Jeruſalem*, which we find mention'd, *Jer.* 52. 6, 7. The *Faſt* of the *fifth* Month, in memory of the deſtruction of the City and Temple of *Jeruſalem*, verſes 12, 13. The *Faſt* of the *ſeventh* Month, in remembrance of the ſlaying of *Gedaliah*, upon which followed the diſperſion of the *Jews*, of which we have an account, *Jer.* 42. 1, 2. And the *Faſt* of the *tenth* Month, in memory of the beginning of the Siege of *Jeruſalem*, of which we find mention, 2 *Kings* 25. 1.

In this order we find theſe *four* Annual Feaſts mention'd, *Zechar.* 8. 19. not according to the order of the Events,but of the Months of the ſeveral Years in which theſe events happened: And there likewiſe God gives a full Anſwer to this Enquiry concerning the continuance of theſe *annual Faſts*, namely, That they ſhould for the future be turned into ſolemn Days of Joy and Gladneſs.
Zech. 8. 18, 19. *And the word of the Lord of Hoſts came unto me, ſaying, Thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the Faſt of the fourth Month, and the Faſt of the fifth, and the Faſt of the ſeventh, and the faſt of the tenth, ſhall be to the Houſe of* Judah *joy and gladneſs, and chearful Feaſts.*

I return now to the Text, *Did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* that is, did theſe *Faſts* truly ſerve to any Religious end and purpoſe? Did not the People content themſelves with a mere external ſhew and performance, without any inward affliction and humiliation of their Souls, in order to a real repentance? Did they not ſtill go on in their ſins; nay, and add to them upon theſe Occaſions, faſting for ſtrife and debate and oppreſſion? In a word, were they not worſe rather than better for them? And therefore God had no regard to them, as it follows in this *Chapter; Thus ſpeaketh the Lord of Hoſts,*
Verſe 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *ſaying; Execute judgment, and ſhew mercy and compaſſion every man to his brother; and oppreſs not the widows nor the fatherleſs, the ſtranger nor the poor; and let none of you imagine miſchief againſt his brother in your heart: But they refuſed to hearken, and pull'd away the ſhoulder, and ſtopped their ears that they ſhould not hear; yea, they made their heart as an Adamant-ſtone, leſt they ſhould hear the Law and the words which the Lord of Hoſts hath ſent by his ſpirit in the former Prophets: Therefore came great wrath from the Lord of Hoſts: Therefore it is come to paſs, that as he cried and they would not hear; ſo they cried, and I would not hear, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.*

So that notwithſtanding theſe outward Solemnities of Faſting and Prayer, here was nothing of a Religious Faſt; *did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* They were ſenſible of the Judgments of God which were broken in upon them, but they did not turn from their ſins, but perſiſted ſtill in their obſtinacy and diſobedience.

And what God here by the Prophet *Zachary* calls *faſting unto Him, even unto Him*, the Prophet *Iſaiah* calls the *Faſt which God hath choſen, and an acceptable day to the Lord. Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? Wherefore have we afflicted our ſouls, and thou takeſt no knowledge? Behold, ye* *faſt for ſtrife and debate, and to ſmite with the fiſt of wickedneſs: ye ſhall not faſt as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it ſuch a Faſt as I have choſen, a Day for a man to afflict his Soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſackloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a Faſt and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh? Then ſhall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy ſalvation ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily: Then ſhalt thou call and the Lord ſhall anſwer,* &c.

From all which paſſages we may eaſily underſtand wherein theſe *Monthly Faſts* of the *Jews* were defective, and what was the fault that God finds with them when he expoſtulates ſo ſeverely in the *Text: When ye faſted and mourned in the fifth and ſeventh Month, even theſe ſeventy years, did ye at all faſt unto me, even unto me?* In the general, the fault which God finds with them was this, that theſe Solemnities did not ſerve any real end and purpoſe of Religion, but fail'd in their main deſign, which was a ſincere repentance and reformation of their lives: For which reaſon he tells them that they were not at all acceptable to Him, nor eſteem'd by Him as perform'd *unto Him*, becauſe they did not anſwer the true intention and deſign of them.

My work at this time ſhall be, *Firſt*, to conſider in general what it is to *faſt* unto God, that is, to keep a truly Religious Faſt. *Secondly*, to bring the matter nearer to our ſelves, I ſhall conſider more particularly, what the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majeſties* for a ſolemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, does require at our hands.

I. I ſhall conſider in general what it is to *faſt unto God*, that is, to keep a truly Religious Faſt. And of this I ſhall give an account in the following particulars. *Firſt*, a truly Religious Faſt conſiſts in the afflicting of our Bodies by a ſtrict abſtinence, that ſo they may be fit and proper inſtruments to promote and help forward the grief and trouble of our minds. *Secondly*, in the humble Confeſſion of our Sins to God with ſhame and confuſion of face, and with a hearty contrition and ſorrow for them. *Thirdly*, in an earneſt deprecation of God's diſpleaſure, and humble ſupplications to Him that He would avert his Judgments and turn away his Anger from us. *Fourthly*, in Interceſſion with God for ſuch ſpiritual and temporal Bleſſings upon our ſelves and others as are needful and convenient. *Fifthly*, in Alms and Charity to the Poor, that our Humiliation and Prayers may find acceptance with God. I do but mention theſe particulars, that I may more largely inſiſt upon that which I mainly intended, and propoſed to conſider in the next place, namely, I.

II. What the Duty of this Day, appointed by their *Majeſties* for a ſolemn Humiliation and Repentance throughout the Nation, doth require at our hands. And this I ſhall endeavour to comprize in the following particulars. *Firſt*, that we ſhould humble our ſelves before God every one for his own perſonal Sins, whereby he hath provoked God, and increaſed the publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the judgments and vengeance of God upon the Nation. *Secondly*, that we ſhould likewiſe heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; eſpecially the great and crying Sins of the Nation, committed by all Ranks and Orders of men amongſt us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been ſo juſtly incenſed againſt us. *Thirdly*, we ſhould moſt importunately deprecate thoſe terrible Judgments of God to which theſe our great and crying Sins have ſo juſtly expoſed us. *Fourthly*, II.

we ſhould pour out our earneſt Prayers and Supplications to Almighty God for the preſervation of their *Majeſties* Sacred Perſons, and for the eſtabliſhment and proſperity of their Government, and for the good ſucceſs of their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land. *Fifthly*, our Faſting and Prayers ſhould be accompanied with our Charity and Alms to the poor and needy. *Laſtly*, we ſhould proſecute our Repentance and good Reſolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our lives. Of theſe I ſhall, by God's Aſſiſtance, ſpeak as briefly and as plainly as I can, and ſo as every one of us may underſtand what God requires of him upon ſo ſolemn an Occaſion as this.

Firſt, We ſhould humble our ſelves before God every one for his own perſonal Sins and Miſcarriages, whereby he hath provoked God, and increaſed the Publick Guilt, and done his part to bring down the Judgments and Vengeance of God upon the Nation. Our Humiliation and Repentance ſhould begin with our ſelves and our own ſins, becauſe Repentance is always deſign'd to end in Reformation; but there cannot be a general Reformation without the Reformation of particular Perſons which do conſtitute and make up the generality.

And this *Solomon* preſcribes as the true Method of a National Reformation, and the proper effect of a publick Humiliation and Repentance; in that admi-
1 Kings 8. 37, 38, 39, 40. rable Prayer of his at the Dedication of the Temple: *If there be*, ſays he, *in the Land famine; if there be peſtilence, blaſting, mildew, locuſt, or if there be caterpillar; or if their Enemy beſiege them in the Land of their Cities: whatever plague, whatever ſickneſs there be; what prayer or ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy People of* Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART, *and ſpread forth his hands towards this Houſe: Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his way, whoſe heart thou knoweſt, for thou, even thou only, knoweſt the hearts of all the children of men; that they may fear thee, all the days which they live in the Land which thou gaveſt to their Fathers.*

You ſee here that in caſe of any publick Judgment or Calamity the Humiliation and Repentance of a Nation muſt begin with particular Perſons: *What prayer or ſupplication ſoever be made by any man, or by all thy People* Iſrael, WHO SHALL KNOW EVERY MAN THE PLAGUE OF HIS OWN HEART: *Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive.* Particular perſons muſt be convinced of their perſonal Sins and Tranſgreſſions, before God will hear the Prayers and forgive the Sins of a Nation.

And becauſe we cannot perform this part of confeſſing and bewailing our own perſonal Sins, and of teſtifying our particular Repentance for them, in the publick Congregation, any otherwiſe than by joyning with them in a general Humiliation and Repentance; therefore we ſhould do well, on the Day before the publick Faſt, or at leaſt the Morning before we go to the publick Aſſembly, to humble our ſelves before God in our Families, and eſpecially in our Cloſets; confeſſing to Him, with great ſhame and ſorrow, all the particular Sins and Offences, together with the ſeveral Aggravations of them, which we have been guilty of againſt the Divine Majeſty, ſo far as we are able to call them particularly to our remembrance; and earneſtly to beg of God the pardon and forgiveneſs of them, for his Mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*.

And ſo likewiſe, after we return from the Church, we ſhould retire again into our Cloſets, and there renew our Repentance, with moſt ſerious and ſincere Reſolutions of reforming in all thoſe particulars which we have confeſſed and repented of. And if we would have our Reſolutions to come to any good, we muſt make them as diſtinct and particular as we can; and charge it upon our ſelves, as to ſuch and ſuch Sins, for which we have declared our ſorrow and repentance, that we will amend and do better for the future.

And we ſhould endeavour alſo, to fortifie theſe good Reſolutions, in the beſt manner we can, by ſerious conſideration and by ſolemn promiſes of better obedience, and of a more conſcientious Care of our Lives and all our Actions for the future: And then, with the greateſt earneſtneſs and importunity, we ſhould implore the Aſſiſtance of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to this purpoſe.

By this means the great End of a ſolemn Faſt and Humiliation will be in ſome good Meaſure attain'd, and not wholly defeated, as for the moſt part it is by being hudled up and loſt in a confuſed and general Repentance, which, commonly ends together with the publick Aſſembly, without any real and permanent Effect upon particular Perſons: Perhaps a great part of the Congregation may have been in ſome degree ſorry for their ſins; but after all no man forſakes them, nor is the better for his ſorrow, but leaves that behind him in the Church, and carries home with him the ſame Affection for his Sins which he had before, and a ſecret Reſolution not to leave them.

Thus it was with the People of the *Jews*. They had their ſolemn monthly Faſts, in which they made a great ſhew of Humiliation, *hanging down their heads like a bulruſh for a day, and ſpreading ſackcloth and aſhes under them:* But there was no inward change of their minds, no real Reformation of their Lives; and aſſoon as ever the publick Solemnity was over, they turned every one to his former evil Courſe. So God complains of them: *I hearkned*, ſays He, *and I heard, but they ſpake not aright; no man repented him of his wickedneſs, ſaying, what have I done? but they turned every one to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battel.* Jer. 8. 6. *They ſpake not aright*, that is, they did not take the right Method for an effectual Repentance: They humbled themſelves indeed before God, and repented at random for the Sins of the Nation in general, which they were all of them ready enough to acknowledge, and to lay a heavy load of guilt upon the Community: But all this while, they never reflected upon themſelves in particular; they had no ſenſe, no conviction of their own perſonal faults and miſcarriages, without which there can be no true general Repentance: *No man repented of his wickedneſs, ſaying, what have I done?*

And as they had no ſenſe of their own particular Sins which they had been guilty of, ſo they had no thought of leaving them; but aſſoon as ever the publick Faſting and Humiliation was over, they return'd to them again with the ſame eager and furious Appetite; *they turned every one to his courſe, as the horſe ruſheth into the battel*, that is, without any conſideration, or ſenſe of danger.

Secondly, We ſhould likewiſe upon this *Day*, heartily lament and bewail the Sins of others; eſpecially the great and crying Sins of the Nation committed by all Ranks and Orders of Men amongſt us, and whereby the wrath and indignation of Almighty God hath been ſo juſtly incenſed againſt us.

This hath been the temper and practice of good men in all Ages, to be greatly troubled and afflicted for the Sins of others, as well as for their own; to mourn for them in ſecret, as the Prophet *Jeremy* does for the obſtinacy and impenitency of the *Jews*, and for the terrible Judgments and Calamities which their Sins were ready to bring down upon them: *But if ye will not return*, ſays he to that obdurate People, *my ſoul ſhall weep in ſecret places for your pride*, or obſtinacy; *and mine eyes ſhall weep ſore and run down with tears, becauſe the Lord's Flock is carried away captive.* Jer. 13. 17. And indeed almoſt the whole Prophecy of *Jeremy*, and his Book of *Lamentations*, are

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little elſe but a perpetual Humiliation and Mourning for the Sins of that People, and for the Judgments of God which he ſaw already inflicted, or foreſaw to be coming upon them.

We read likewiſe of *Lot*, when he dwelt in *Sodom*, how *he was vexed with the filthy converſation of the wicked: For that righteous man*, ſaith St. *Peter, dwelling among them, in ſeeing and hearing vexed his righteous ſoul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds.*

Holy *David* alſo, upon all occaſions, teſtifies his great trouble and grief for the Sins which he ſaw committed by others, and was ſo affected with
Pſ.119.36. them that he trembled at the very thought of them: *Rivers of tears*, ſays he, *run down mine eyes, becauſe men keep not thy Law:* And in the ſame
v.53. *Pſalm, Horrour hath taken hold of me, becauſe of the wicked which forſake thy*
v.158. *Law:* And again, *I beheld the tranſgreſſours and was grieved, becauſe they kept not thy Word.*

And how does *Daniel* humble himſelf before God and mourn, and in the Name of all the People, and of all Degrees and Orders of men among them, take ſhame to himſelf and them, for the great Sins which they had been guil-
Dan.9.5,7,8. ty of? *We have ſinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, O Lord, righteouſneſs belongeth unto thee, but unto us confuſion of face, as at this day: To our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, becauſe we have ſinned againſt thee.*

With what trouble and confuſion does *Ezra*, upon a ſolemn Day of Faſting and Humiliation, acknowledge and bewail the Sins of the People? *O my God,*
Ezra 9.6,7 ſays he, *I am aſhamed and bluſh to lift up my face to thee my God: For our iniquities are increaſed over our heads, and our treſpaſſes grown up unto the heavens: Since the days of our Fathers, we have been in a great treſpaſs unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our Kings and our Prieſts, been delivered into the hands of the Kings of the Lands,* &c.

And thus alſo ought we, the People of this ſinful Land, upon this ſolemn Day of Faſting and Humiliation, to ſet our Sins in order before us, with all their heinous Aggravations; and in the bitterneſs of our ſouls to lament and bewail that general prevalence of Impiety and Vice which hath overſpread the Nation, and diffuſed it ſelf through all Ranks and Degrees of Men, *Magiſtrates, Miniſters* and *People.* I ſhall ſpeak ſomething more particularly concerning each of theſe.

1. The Sins of the *Magiſtrates* and thoſe that are in Authority. They that make Laws for others, and are to ſee to the execution of them, ought to be ſtrict obſervers of them themſelves. For it muſt needs put a man not a little out of countenance to be ſevere upon thoſe faults in others of which he knows himſelf to be notoriouſly guilty. And yet how many are there, whoſe place and duty it is to correct the Vices and Immoralities of others, who are far from being Examples of Vertue themſelves? And therefore it is no wonder that there is ſo lame and unequal a diſtribution of Juſtice in the Nation, and that Magiſtrates are ſo cold and ſlack in the diſcountenancing of Vice and Impiety, and in putting the good and wholeſome Laws made againſt them in execution: As againſt the profanation of the Lord's Day, by ſecular buſineſs, by vain ſports and paſtimes, which by the very nature of them are apt to diſſolve the minds of men into mirth and pleaſure, and to carry them off from all ſerious thoughts of God and Religion, and from the Meditations of another World; and to give the Devil an advantage, and an opportunity which he never fails to take, to ſteal *the good ſeed*, the Word of God, which they have heard that Day, out of their hearts, and to make it of none effect: And which is yet worſe, by lewd and ſinful practices, which are

unlawful at any time, but upon that Day, are a double breach and violation of God's Law.

And likewiſe by neglecting to put in execution the Laws againſt profane *Swearing* and *Curſing*, for which the Land mourns; and againſt *Drunkenneſs*, and *Adultery*, and *Fornication*, which are ſo common, and ſo impudently committed amongſt us: whether they be Civil, or Eccleſiaſtical Laws; and it is hard to ſay which of them are moſt remiſly executed.

And to mention no more, by neglecting to proſecute that horrible Sin of *Murther*, ſo frequently now committed in our Streets beyond the example of former Ages, with that ſeverity and impartiality which is neceſſary to free the Nation from the guilt of that crying Sin, which calls ſo loud to Heaven for Vengeance.

And all this, notwithſtanding the Magiſtrates are under the Oath of God to put the Laws in due execution againſt all theſe Crimes, ſo far as they come to their knowledge, and fall under their cogniſance.

2. The Sins of the *Miniſters*, who ſerve at God's Altar, and watch over the Souls of men, whoſe blood will be required at their hands, if any of them periſh through their fault and neglect. There is no reaſon to doubt, but that there are a good number of faithful Shepherds in the Land, who watch over their Flocks with great care and conſcience, remembring the dreadful Account which they muſt one Day make to *Him who ſhall judge the quick and dead*, of the Souls committed to their charge.

But yet how groſly do many of us fail of the faithful diſcharge of the ſubſtantial parts of this high Office? wanting a juſt ſenſe of the ineſtimable worth and value of the Souls of men for whom Chriſt died; taking little or no care to inſtruct them in the good knowledge of the Lord, and to lead them in the way to eternal happineſs by an exemplary converſation.

Nay too many among us demean themſelves ſo ſcandalouſly, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives ſo directly contrary to it; and to alienate their People from the Church, and to make them to abhor the Sacrifice and Service of the Lord by their wicked and unhallowed Converſations: hereby expoſing them to the Craft of Seducers, and rendring them an eaſie prey to the *Emiſſaries* of the Church of *Rome*, or to any other Sect and Faction that pretends a greater zeal for Religion, or makes a better ſhew of a ſtrict and unblameable life.

For who will regard or believe thoſe Teachers, who give all the evidence that can be by their lives and actions, that they do not believe themſelves and their own Doctrines? When all is ſaid, the life and manners of the Preacher are the beſt eloquence, and have that dint and power of perſwaſion in them, which no words, no art can equal. Who ſo lives as he ſpeaks, does, as it is ſaid of our Bleſſed *Saviour*, *Speaks as one that hath authority, and not as the Scribes: Not as the Scribes*; whoſe words, notwithſtanding all the formality and gravity with which they were deliver'd, did therefore want weight and force, becauſe, as our *Saviour* tells us of them, *they ſaid, but did not*; their Lives were not anſwerable to their Doctrines: Whereas our Bleſſed Saviour therefore *ſpoke as never man ſpake*, becauſe he liv'd as never man liv'd; ſo innocent, ſo uſeful, ſo exemplary a life: He *was holy, harmleſs, and undefil'd*: He *did no ſin, neither was guile found in his lips*: He *fulfilled all righteouſneſs, and went about doing good*. This was that which made Him ſo powerful *a Preacher of Righteouſneſs*; and we muſt neceſſarily fall ſo much ſhort of *Him* in the authority and efficacy of our *Sermons*, as we do in the holineſs and goodneſs of our *Lives*. Such a Preacher, and ſuch a practice as that of our bleſſed *Saviour* was, is every way fitted to reprove, and perſwade, and reform Mankind.

We now live in an Age and Church, wherein they who are called to be the Teachers and Guides of Souls ought to take great heed both to their Doctrine and their Lives; that the Name of God may not be blaſphem'd, and his holy Religion be brought into contempt by thoſe, who, above all others, are moſt nearly concern'd to preſerve and ſupport the credit and honour of it.

And we cannot but ſee, how our Religion and Church are beſet and endanger'd on every ſide; by the rude aſſaults of Infidelity, and by the cunning Arts of ſeducing Spirits, and by our own inteſtine Heats and Diviſions: And it can never be ſufficiently lamented, no though it were with tears of blood, that we whoſe particular charge and employment it is to build up the Souls of Men in a holy Faith, and in the reſolution of a good Life, ſhould, for want of due inſtruction, and by the diſſolute and profligate lives of too many among us, and by inflaming our needleſs Differences about leſſer things, have ſo great a hand in pulling down Religion, and in betraying the Souls of Men either to downright Infidelity, or to a careleſs neglect and profane contempt of all Religion.

May not God juſtly expoſtulate this matter with us, as he did of old with the People of the *Jews?* *A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the Land; the Prophets propheſy falſly, and the Prieſts bear rule by their means, and my People love to have it ſo; and what will ye do in the end thereof?* When they who are the Paſtors and Guides of Souls, have by their ill conduct and management brought matters to that paſs, that the generality of the People ſit down contented with the worſt ſtate of things, and are become almoſt indifferent whether they have any Religion or not, what can the end of theſe things be, but that *the Kingdom of God will be taken from us, and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it?* Jer. 5. 30, 31.

If ever there be a publick Reformation among us, it muſt begin at the Houſe of God; and they who are the Miniſters of Religion muſt lead on this work, and be more careful and conſcientious in the diſcharge of that high and holy Office which is committed to them by *the Great Shepherd and Biſhop of Souls.* Elſe, what ſhall we ſay when God ſhall challenge us, as he once did the Paſtors of the *Jewiſh* Church, by his Prophet, ſaying, *Where is the Flock that was given thee, thy beautiful Flock? what wilt thou ſay when he ſhall puniſh thee?* Jer. 13. 20, 21.

3. The Sins of the *People*; amongſt whom there is almoſt an univerſal corruption and depravation of Manners; inſomuch that Impiety and Vice ſeem to have over-ſpread the face of the Nation; ſo that we may take up that ſad complaint of the Prophet concerning the People of *Iſrael*, and apply it to our ſelves; that we *are a ſinful Nation, a People laden with iniquity, a ſeed of evil-doers*; that *the whole head is ſick, and the whole heart faint*; and that *from the ſole of the foot even to the head, there is no ſoundneſs in us, but wounds, and bruiſes, and putrifying ſores.* Iſai. 1. 4, 5.

We may juſtly ſtand amaz'd to conſider, how *the God of all patience* is provok'd by us every day; to think, how long he hath born with us and *ſuffered our manners*; our open Profaneneſs, and Infidelity; our great Immoralities, and groſs Hypocriſie; our inſolent contempt of Religion, and our ill-ſavour'd counterfeiting of it for low and ſordid ends: And, which is the moſt melancholy conſideration of all the reſt, we ſeem to be degenerated to that degree, that it is very much to be fear'd, there is hardly integrity enough left amongſt us to ſave us.

And then if we conſider further our moſt uncharitable and unchriſtian Diviſions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation: Our incorrigibleneſs under the Judgments of God which we have ſeen abroad in the Earth, and which have in a very ſevere and terrible manner been inflicted upon theſe Kingdoms, that the *Inhabitants thereof might learn righteouſneſs:* Our inſenſibleneſs of the Hand of God, ſo viſible in his late Providences towards us, and in the many merciful and wonderful Deliverances which from time to time He hath wrought for us.

And laſtly, if we reflect upon our horrible Ingratitude to God our Saviour and mighty Deliverer; and to Them likewiſe whom He hath ſo ſignally honour'd in making them the happy Means and Inſtruments of our Deliverance: And this, not only expreſs'd by a bold contempt of their Authority, but by a moſt unnatural Conſpiracy againſt Them with the greateſt Enemies, not only to the Peace of the Nation, but likewiſe to the Reformed Religion therein profeſs'd and by Law eſtabliſhed; and to the intereſt of it all the World over.

So that we may ſay with *Ezra, And now, O our God, what ſhall we ſay* Ezra 9.6. *unto thee after this?* And may not God likewiſe ſay to us, as He did more than once to the *Jews? Shall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?*

Thirdly, We ſhould likewiſe, upon this Day, earneſtly deprecate God's diſpleaſure, and make our humble Supplications to Him, that he would be graciouſly pleas'd to avert thoſe terrible Judgments which hang over us, and which we have juſt cauſe to fear may fall upon us; and that He would be entreated by us at laſt to be appeas'd towards us, and to turn from the fierceneſs of his Anger.

This we find the People of God were wont to do upon their Solemn Days of Faſting and Prayer; and this God expreſly enjoyns: *Blow the Trumpet in* Joel 2.15, 16, 17. Zion, *ſanctifie a Faſt, call a ſolemn Aſſembly; gather the People, ſanctifie the Congregation, aſſemble the Elders,* &c. *Let the Prieſts, the Miniſters of the Lord, weep between the Porch and the Altar, and let them ſay, Spare thy People, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the Heathen ſhould rule over them: Wherefore ſhould they ſay among the People, Where is their God?*

And to this earneſt deprecation of his Judgments, God promiſeth a gracious anſwer; for ſo it immediately follows: *Then will the Lord be jealous for* Verſ.18. *his Land, and pity his People.*

And thus likewiſe *Daniel,* when he ſet his face *to ſeek the Lord God, by* Dan.9.3. *prayer and ſupplication, with faſting and ſackcloth and aſhes,* does in a moſt humble and earneſt manner deprecate the diſpleaſure of God towards his People, and beg of Him to remove his Judgments, and to turn away his Anger from them, *O Lord, according to all thy righteouſneſs, I beſeech thee, let thine* Verſ.16, 17,18,19. *anger and thy fury be turned away from thy City* Jeruſalem, *thy Holy Mountain: Becauſe for our ſins, and for the iniquity of our Fathers,* Jeruſalem *and thy People are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O God, hear the prayer of thy ſervant and his ſupplication; and cauſe thy face to ſhine upon thy ſanctuary which is deſolate, for the Lord's ſake. O my God, incline thine ear and hear, open thine eyes and behold our deſolations, and the City which is called by thy Name: For we do not preſent our ſupplications before thee for our righteouſneſs, but for thy great mercy: O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do; defer not for thine own ſake, O my God; for thy City and thy People are called by thy Name.*

And thus alſo ſhould We, upon this Solemn Occaſion, cry mightily unto God, and with the greateſt importunity deprecate thoſe terrible Judgments which we ſo righteouſly have deſerv'd, and to which the great and crying Sins of the whole Nation have ſo juſtly expoſed us: Humbly beſeeching Him, not for our Righteouſneſs, but for his great Mercy; for his own Name's ſake, and becauſe we are his People, and are called by his Name, and becauſe his Holy Truth and Religion are profeſs'd amongſt us; that He would be pleas'd to hear the Prayers of his Servants and their Supplications which they have made before him this Day, *for the Lord's ſake.*

Fourthly, We ſhould likewiſe, upon this Day, pour out our moſt earneſt Supplications to Almighty God, for the preſervation of Their *Majeſties* Sacred Perſons, and for the proſperity and eſtabliſhment of Their Government, and for the good Succeſs of Their Arms and Forces by Sea and Land.

And more eſpecially, ſince His *Majeſty,* with ſo many Confederate Princes and States of *Europe,* is engaged in ſo neceſſary an Undertaking for the Common good of *Chriſtendom,* and for the mutual preſervation and recovery of Their reſpective Rights: We ſhould earneſtly implore the favour and aſſiſtance of Almighty God in ſo juſt and glorious a Cauſe, againſt the common Invader and Oppreſſor of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.

And that of his infinite Goodneſs He would be graciouſly pleaſed to take the Perſon of our *Soveraign Lord* the *King* into the particular care and protection of his Providence: That He would ſecure his precious Life from all ſecret Attempts, and from open Violence: That he would give his Angels charge over him, and cover his Head in the day of Battel, and crown it with Victory over his Enemies, and reſtore Him to us again in ſafety.

And that He would likewiſe preſerve and direct the *Queen's Majeſty*, in whoſe hands the Adminiſtration of the Government is at preſent ſo happily plac'd: That He would give Her Wiſdom and Reſolution for ſuch a Time as this, and ſupport and carry Her through all the Difficulties of it.

And, Laſtly, That He would bleſs them Both with a long Life, and a peaceful and happy Reign over us; that *under them we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

Fifthly, Our Faſting and Humiliation ſhould be accompanied with our Alms and Charity to the poor and needy: And we ſhould every one of us, according to the counſel given by the Prophet to King *Nebuchadnezzar, break off our ſins by righteouſneſs, and our iniquities by ſhewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthning of our tranquility:* Hereby intimating, that if there be any way to prevent or remove the Judgments of God, and to prolong the tranquility and happineſs of Prince and People, a ſincere Repentance, and a great Charity to them that are in neceſſity and diſtreſs, are moſt likely to prevail with God, not only to reſpite the ruine of a ſinful People, but to incline Him to thoughts of Peace towards them: For ſo he promiſeth to the *Jews* upon their ſincere Repentance, and earneſt Supplication to Him, which are always accompanied with Charity to the Poor: *For I know the thoughts which I think towards you, ſaith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end: Then ſhall ye call upon me, and ye ſhall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you: And ye ſhall ſeek me, and find me, when ye ſhall ſearch for me with all your heart.*

Dan. 4. 27.

Jer. 29. 11, 12, 13.

And I have often thought that the extraordinary Charity of this whole Nation, and of our pious Princes, who are ſo ready to every good Work, and ſuch bright and ſhining Examples in this kind, more than once ſo ſeaſonably extended to the relief of our diſtreſſed Brethren, who fled hither for refuge from the Rage and Cruelty of their Perſecutors: I ſay, I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the infinite Mercy and Goodneſs of Almighty God, hath had a very particular influence upon our preſervation and deliverance from thoſe terrible Calamities which were juſt ready to ruſh in upon us. And what cauſe have we to thank God, who hath allotted to us this more bleſſed and merciful part, to *give* and not to *receive*; and to be free from Perſecution our ſelves, that ſo we might be in a capacity to give refuge and relief to them that were perſecuted?

There are but few that have the faith to believe it, but certainly Charity to the Poor is a great Security to us in times of evil: So *David* aſſures us, ſpeaking of the *Righteous* or *Charitable* Man; *He ſhall not*, ſays he, *be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of Dearth he ſhall be ſatisfied.*

And ſo likewiſe in Times of publick Diſtreſs, when we are beſet with cruel and powerful Enemies, who if God were not on our ſide, would ſwallow us up, the publick Charity of a Nation hath many times prov'd its beſt ſafeguard and ſhield: *It ſhall fight for thee*, ſaith the Son of *Sirach*, ſpeaking of the Charity of Alms, *againſt thine Enemy, more than a mighty ſhield and ſtrong ſpear.*

And of this, as I ſaid before, I doubt not but we of this Nation, by the great Mercy and Goodneſs of God to us, have had happy experience in our late wonderful Deliverance under the Conduct and Valour of one of the beſt and braveſt of Princes; to whom by too many among us, the moſt unworthy and unthankful returns have been made for all the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the many deſperate hazards to which he hath expoſed himſelf for our ſakes, that ever were made to ſo great and generous a Benefactor: To ſo great a Benefactor, I ſay, not only to theſe Nations, but even to all *Europe*, in aſſerting and maintaining their Liberties againſt the inſolent pride and unjuſt encroachments of one of the greateſt Oppreſſors the World hath known for many Ages: Of whom it may be ſaid as *Job* doth of the *Leviathan*, *Upon the earth there is not his like*: I am glad I cannot apply what immediately follows, That *he is made without fear*; but ſurely the next words are appoſite enough, *He beholdeth all high things, and is King of all the children of pride*: And yet *He that is higher than the higheſt*, even *He that ſitteth in the Heavens doth laugh at him*, *for He ſeeth that his Day is coming.* Job 41.33, 34.

To conclude this *Particular*; If we would have our Prayers aſcend up to Heaven, and find acceptance there, our Alms muſt go along with them: So the *Angel* intimates when he ſays to *Cornelius*, *Thy Prayers and thine Alms are gone up for a memorial before God*: Thy *Prayers* and thine *Alms*; they muſt go together if we deſire that our Prayers ſhould be effectual. And the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ſpeaking of the *Faſt which God hath choſen*, and which is *acceptable* to Him, makes Charity and Alms a moſt eſſential part of it: *Is it not*, ſays he, *to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe; when thou ſeeſt the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy ſelf from thine own fleſh? Then ſhalt thou call, and the Lord ſhall anſwer; thou ſhalt cry, and He ſhall ſay, Here I am.* Acts 10.4. Iſa. 58.7, 9.

Sixthly and *Laſtly*, We ſhould Proſecute our Repentance and good Reſolutions to the actual Reformation and Amendment of our Lives. For in *this* Repentance doth mainly conſiſt: This is the proper fruit and effect of all our Humiliation and good Reſolutions, to forſake our ſins, and to become better for the future; more pious and devout towards God, more ſober and chaſt with regard to our ſelves, more juſt and charitable, more humble and meek towards all men: In a word, more innocent, more uſeful, and more *holy in all manner of converſation*.

And without this, all our Faſting and Humiliation, our moſt earneſt Prayers and Supplications, will ſignifie nothing: All our Sorrow and Tears will be but as water ſpilt upon the ground, and will not turn to any account either to ſave our own Souls, or to preſerve *this untoward Generation, this crooked and perverſe Nation*, from ruin and deſtruction. So God tells *Solomon*, that this is the only way to appeaſe and reconcile Him to a ſinful People: *If* 2 Chron.7. 14. *my People which is called by my Name ſhall humble themſelves, and pray, and ſeek my face, and turn from their wicked ways: Then will I hear in Heaven, and forgive their ſin, and heal their Land.*

And if this were the happy effect of our Prayers and Humiliation this Day, Zech.8.19. to *turn us from our wicked ways*; God would then turn away his anger from us; and, as he promiſed to the *Jews* by the Prophet *Zachary*, He would turn theſe our monthly Faſts *into joy, and gladneſs, and cheerful feaſts*; as he hath in a great meaſure already done, *Bleſſed be his great and glorious Name.*

But if we will not hearken and obey, can we expect that God ſhould deliver us from the hands of our Enemies, that we may ſin againſt Him without fear all the days of our Lives? To what Purpoſe ſhould the Providence of God take ſo much care to preſerve our Religion to us, when we make no better uſe of it for the direction and government of our Lives? When it ſerves moſt of us only to talk of it; and too many amongſt us, to talk againſt it; to deride it, and deſpitefully to uſe it. If this be the truth of our Caſe, what can we ſay, why the Kingdom of God ſhould not be taken from us and given to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits of it? What can we ſay, why our Candleſtick ſhould not be remov'd, and the light of the glorious Goſpel of *Chriſt* which we have ſo long enjoyed, and ſo long rebelled againſt, ſhould not be utterly extinguiſh'd amongſt us?

And if I cannot prevail with you to come to theſe good Reſolutions, and to make them good: If you will not be perſwaded to practiſe, yet be pleas'd to attend to what we ſay: Hear our words at leaſt, if ye will not do them. This the People of the *Jews* would do, when they were at the worſt: So God tells Ezek.33. 31. the *Prophet* concerning them: *They come unto thee, as the People cometh; and they ſit before thee, as my People; and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.*

I had much rather at any time have occaſion to praiſe than to reprove, eſpecially in this great Aſſembly: And yet it is not to be diſſembled, that the behaviour of too many in this place is frequently ſo careleſs and irreverent, as is very misbecoming thoſe who are in the more peculiar Preſence of the Great and glorious *Majeſty of Heaven and Earth*, and profeſs at that very time to worſhip Him.

I am ſure, we have a better Pattern perpetually before us; of a decent and unaffected devotion, of a moſt ſerious and ſteddy attention, without wandring, without diverſion, and without drowſineſs: ſuch an Example as I cannot but hope will in a ſhort time gain upon us all, and by a more gentle and ſilent reproof win us to the imitation of it.

And if we could but be prevail'd upon to demean our ſelves with that Reverence, and to hear with that Attention, which becomes the Worſhip and the Word of God, it might then be hop'd that we would conſider what is ſaid; and conſideration would probably work conviction, and conviction bring us to a better mind, and to a firm purpoſe of doing what we are inwardly convinc'd it is both our duty and our intereſt to do.

Let us then go away from this Solemnity, with a reſolution to do every one what we ought; truly and earneſtly to repent us of our ſins paſt, and to lead a new life for the future; to fear that *great and terrible God*, in whoſe preſence we have humbled our ſelves this Day; and to *turn to Him that hath ſmitten us*, leſt we provoke him *to puniſh us yet ſeven times more*, and after that *ſeven times more for our ſins*, and for our impenitency in them, till at laſt *He make our plagues wonderful.*

To conclude; Let us every one, with that true Penitent in *Job*, take words to our ſelves, and ſay, *Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more; that which I ſee not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Oh! that there were ſuch a heart in us, that it might be well with us, and with our children for ever.*

Which God of his infinite Goodneſs grant, for his Mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*: To whom with thee, O *Father* and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XL.

That God is the only Happineſs of Man.

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

WHITEHALL,

March the 20th. 169$\frac{1}{2}$.

PSALM LXXIII. 25.

Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.

THE Deſign of this *Pſalm* is to vindicate the Goodneſs and Juſtice of the Divine Providence, notwithſtanding the proſperous eſtate of the wicked and the afflicted condition of good men many times in this World. And in the firſt place, the *Pſalmiſt*, whoever he was, whether *David* or *Aſaph*, lays down this for a moſt certain Truth Ver.1. that God is good to good men: *Of a truth God is good to* Iſrael, *to ſuch as are of a clean heart.*

And yet for all this he tells us, that at ſome times he was under no ſmall temptation to queſtion the truth of this *Principle*, when he beheld the promiſcuous diſpenſation of things here below; that the wicked are often proſperous, and good men expoſed to great calamities in this life; as if God either neglected humane affairs, or had a greater kindneſs for the Workers of Ver.2. Iniquity, than for Pious and Good Men: *As for me, my foot had well nigh ſlipp'd; for I was envious at the fooliſh, when I ſaw the proſperity of the wicked.*

This, he ſays, was a very great ſtumbling block to good men, and tempt- Ver.10. ed them to doubt of the Providence of God: *Therefore his People return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out of them; and they ſay, Doth God know, and is there knowledge in the moſt High?* This Sentence is ſomewhat obſcurely rendred in our *Tranſlation*, ſo as make the ſence of it difficult;

which is plainly this: *Therefore his people return hither*; that is, therefore good men come to this, in the greatneſs of their affliction, and in the bitterneſs of their ſoul, to queſtion God's knowledge and care of humane affairs.

Behold, ſay they, *theſe are the ungodly, and yet they are the proſperous in the world, they increaſe in riches*: To what purpoſe then is it for any man to be Religious and Vertuous? *Verily, I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency*: In vain have I endeavoured after purity of heart and innocency of life, ſince ſo little good comes of it; nay, ſo far from that, that I have been in continual trouble and affliction: *All the day long have I been plagued, and chaſtned every morning.* Ver. 12. Ver. 13. Ver. 14.

Such thoughts as theſe often came into his mind, and gave him great trouble and diſquiet: But he preſently corrects himſelf: *If I ſay I will ſpeak thus, I ſhould offend againſt the generation of thy Children*; that is, I ſhould go againſt the ſenſe of all pious and good men, who have always believed the Providence of God notwithſtanding this Objection: Which at laſt he tells us he had raiſed on purpoſe to try if he could find the ſolution of it: *I thought to know this, which was grievous in mine eyes*: And then he reſolves all into the unſearchable Wiſdom of the Divine Providence, which if we fully underſtood from firſt to laſt, we ſhould ſee good reaſon to be ſatisfied with the equity of it: *When I go into the Sanctuary of God, then ſhall I underſtand the end of theſe men? How thou didſt ſet them in ſlippery places*, &c. This ſatisfied him, that whenever the ſecret deſign of God's Providence ſhould be unfolded, whether in this World or the other, how ſtrange and croſs ſoever things might ſeem to be at preſent, yet in the iſſue and concluſion it would appear, that neither are bad men ſo happy, nor good men ſo miſerable, as at preſent they may ſeem to be. Ver. 15. Ver. 16. Ver. 17, 18.

So that upon a full debate of this matter, the *Pſalmiſt* concludes, that theſe Objections againſt Providence do ſpring from our ignorance, and ſhort and imperfect view of things; whereas if we ſaw the whole deſign from beginning to end, it would appear to be very reaſonable and regular. *Thus my heart was grieved; ſo fooliſh was I and ignorant, and as a beaſt before thee.* And in regard to himſelf, he tells us, that he ſaw great reaſon to acknowledge God's tender care over him in particular, and that he could find no ſecurity or comfort for himſelf, but in God alone: *Nevertheleſs I am continually with thee; thou haſt holden me by thy right hand: Thou ſhalt guide me with thy counſel, and afterwards receive me to glory*; as if he had ſaid, I am ſenſible of thy conſtant preſence with me, and care of me; and do entirely depend upon thy guidance and direction, not doubting but that my preſent troubles and afflictions will have a happy and glorious iſſue. Ver. 21. Ver. 23.

And at laſt he breaks out into a kind of exultation and triumph for the mighty conſolation which he found in the firm belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God, as the great ſtay and ſupport of his Soul in the worſt condition that could befal him; in the words of the *Text, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.* If a man were to chuſe a happineſs for himſelf, and were to ranſack Heaven and Earth for it, after all his ſearch and enquiry he would at laſt fix upon God as the chief happineſs of man, and the true and only reſt and center of our Souls. This then is the plain meaning of the *Text, That nothing in the world but God can make man happy: Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

That Man of himſelf is not ſufficient for his own happineſs, is evident upon many accounts: Becauſe he is liable to ſo many evils and calamities, which he can neither prevent, nor remedy: He is full of wants which he cannot ſupply; compaſſed about with infirmities which he can only complain of, but is not able to redreſs: He is obnoxious to dangers which he muſt always fear, becauſe he can never ſufficiently provide againſt them.

Conſider Man by himſelf, and from under the conduct and protection of a ſuperiour and more powerful Being, and he is in a moſt diſconſolate and forlorn condition: Secure of nothing that he enjoys, and liable to be diſappointed of every thing that he hopes for: He is apt to grieve for what he cannot help, and perhaps the juſteſt cauſe of his grief is that he cannot help it; for if he could, inſtead of grieving for it, he would help it: He cannot refrain from deſiring a great many things which he would fein have, but is never likely to obtain, becauſe they are out of his power; and it troubles him both that they are ſo, and that he cannot help his being troubled at it.

Thus man walketh in a vain ſhew, and diſquieteth himſelf in vain; courting happineſs in a thouſand ſhapes, and the faſter he follows it, the ſwifter it flies from him. Almoſt every thing promiſeth happineſs to us at a diſtance, ſuch a ſtep of Honour, ſuch a pitch of Eſtate, ſuch a Fortune or Match for a Child: But when we come nearer to it, either we fall ſhort of it, or it falls ſhort of our expectation; and it is hard to ſay which of theſe is the greateſt diſappointment. Our hopes are uſually bigger than enjoyment can ſatisfie, and an evil long fear'd, beſides that it may never come, is many times more painful and troubleſome than the evil it ſelf when it comes.

In a word, man is born to trouble as the ſparks fly upwards. He comes into the World naked and unarm'd, and from himſelf more deſtitute of the natural means of his ſecurity and ſupport than any other Creature whatſoever, as it were on purpoſe to ſhew that he is more peculiarly the care of a Superiour Providence: And as man, of all the Creatures of this lower World, is only made to own and acknowledge a Deity; ſo God in great Wiſdom hath ſo order'd things, that none of the other Creatures ſhould have ſo much need of Him, and ſo much reaſon to acknowledge their neceſſary dependance upon him. So that the words of *David* are the very ſenſe and voice of Nature, declaring to us that Mankind is born into the World upon terms of greater dependence upon the Providence of God than other Creatures: *Thou art he*, ſays *David* there to God, *that tookeſt me out of the womb, thou madeſt me to hope*, or thou didſt keep me in ſafety, *when I was upon my mother's breaſts: I was caſt upon thee from the womb, that art my God from my mother's belly: Be not far from me, for trouble is near*: Trouble is always near to us, and therefore it is happy for us that God is never far from any of us: *For in Him we live, and move, and have our being.* Pſal.22.9, 10, 11.

And when we are grown up, we are liable to a great many miſchiefs and dangers, every moment of our lives; and, without the Providence of God, continually inſecure not only of the good things of this life, but even of life it ſelf: So that when we come to be men, we cannot but wonder how ever we arriv'd at that ſtate, and how we have continued in it ſo long, conſidering the infinite difficulties and dangers which have continually attended us: That in running the *gantlope* of a long life, when ſo many hands have been lifted up againſt us, and ſo many ſtrokes levell'd at us, we have eſcaped ſo free, and with ſo few marks and ſcars upon us: That when we are beſieged with ſo many dangers, and ſo many arrows of death are perpetually flying about us, to which we do ſo many ways lie open, we ſhould yet hold out *twenty*, *forty*, *ſixty* years, and ſome of us perhaps longer, and do ſtill ſtand at the mark untouch'd, at leaſt not dangerouſly wounded by any of them: And conſidering likewiſe this fearful and wonderful frame of a humane Body, this infinitely complicated Engine; in which, to the due performance of the ſeveral functions and offices of life, ſo many ſtrings and ſprings, ſo many receptacles and channels are neceſſary, and all in their right frame and order; and in which, beſides the infinite imperceptible and ſecret ways of mortality, there are ſo many ſluces and flood-gates to let Death in and Life out, that it is next to a miracle, though we take but little notice of it, that every one of us did not die every day ſince we were born: I ſay, conſidering the nice and curious frame of our Bodies, and the innumerable contingencies and hazards of humane Life, which is ſet in ſo ſlippery a place, that we ſtill continue in the land of the living, we cannot aſcribe to any thing but the watchful Providence of Almighty God, *who holds our ſoul in life, and ſuffers not our foot to be moved.*

To the ſame merciful Providence of God we owe, that whilſt we continue in life we have any comfortable poſſeſſion and enjoyment of our ſelves and of that which makes us men, I mean our Reaſon and Underſtanding: That our Imagination is not let looſe upon us, to haunt and torment us with melancholick freaks and fears: That we are not deliver'd up to the horrors of a gloomy and guilty mind: That every day we do not fall into frenzy and diſtraction, which next to wickedneſs and vice is the ſoreſt calamity, and ſaddeſt diſguiſe of humane Nature: I ſay, next to wickedneſs and vice, which is a wilful frenzy, a madneſs not from misfortune but from choice; whereas the *other* proceeds from natural and neceſſary cauſes, ſuch as are in a great meaſure out of our power; ſo that we are perpetually liable to it, from any ſecret and ſudden diſorder of the Brain, from the violence of a Diſeaſe, or the vehement tranſport of any Paſſion.

Now if things were under no government, what could hinder ſo many probable evils from breaking in upon us, and from treading upon the heels of one another? like the calamities of *Job*, when *the hedge which God had ſet about him and all that he had, was broken down and removed.*

So that if there were no God to take care of us, we could be ſecure of no ſort, no degree of happineſs in this World; no not for one moment: And there would be no other World for us to be happy in, and to make amends to us for all the fears and dangers, all the troubles and calamities of this preſent life: For God and another World ſtand and fall together: Without *Him* there can be no Life after this; and if our hopes of happineſs were only in this Life, Man of all other Beings in this lower World would certainly be the moſt miſerable.

I cannot ſay that all the Evils which I have mentioned would happen to all, if the Providence of God did not rule the World; but that every man would be in danger of them all, and have nothing to ſupport and comfort him againſt the fear of that danger. For the Nature of Man, conſider'd by it ſelf, is plainly inſufficient for its own happineſs; ſo that we muſt neceſſarily look abroad, and ſeek for it ſomewhere elſe: And who can ſhew us that good that is equal to all the wants and neceſſities, all the capacities and deſires, all the fears and hopes of humane Nature? Whatſoever can anſwer all theſe, muſt have theſe following Properties,

Firſt, It muſt be an All-ſufficient good.
Secondly, It muſt be perfect Goodneſs.
Thirdly, It muſt be firm and unchangeable in it ſelf.
Fourthly, It muſt be ſuch a good as none can deprive us of, and take away from us.
Fifthly, It muſt be eternal.

Sixthly, It muſt be able to ſupport and comfort us in every condition, and under all the accidents and adverſities of humane Life.

Laſtly, It muſt be ſuch a good as can give perfect reſt and tranquillity to our minds.

Nothing that is ſhort of all this can make us happy: And no Creature, no not the whole Creation, can pretend to be all this to us. All theſe Properties meet only in God, who is the perfect and ſupreme Good; as I ſhall endeavour, in the following Diſcourſe, more particularly to ſhew; and conſequently, *That God is the only happineſs of Man.*

I. *Firſt*, God is an All-ſufficient Good. And this does import *two* things; Wiſdom to contrive our happineſs, and Power to effect it; for neither of theſe without the other is ſufficient, and both theſe in the higheſt and moſt eminent degree are in God.

He is infinitely *Wiſe* to deſign and contrive our happineſs; becauſe he knows what Happineſs is, and how to frame us ſo as to be capable of the happineſs he deſigns for us; and how to order and diſpoſe all other things ſo, as that they ſhall be no hindrance and impediment to it.

He perfectly underſtands all the poſſibilities of things, and how to fit means to any end. He knows all our wants, and how to ſupply them; all our hopes and deſires, and how to ſatisfie them: He foreſees all the dangers and evils which threaten us, and knows how to prevent or divert them, if he think fit; or if he permit them to come, how to ſupport us under them, or to deliver us out of them, or to turn them to our greater benefit and advantage in the laſt iſſue and reſult of things.

His Wiſdom cannot be ſurprized by any accident which he did not foreſee, and which he is not ſufficiently provided againſt. The Wiſdom of men is but ſhort and imperfect, and liable to infinite errors and miſtakes: In many caſes men know not what is ſafeſt and beſt for them, nor whether *this* or *that* will conduce moſt to their happineſs: Nay it often happens that thoſe very means which the wiſeſt men chuſe for their ſecurity do prove the occaſions of their ruine, and they are thrown down by thoſe very ways whereby they thought to raiſe and to eſtabliſh themſelves.

Eſpecially if God breathe upon the Counſels of men, how are their deſigns blaſted? How are they infatuated and foil'd in their deepeſt contrivances, and *ſnared in the work of their own hands?* When *it is of the Lord*, the wiſdom of the greateſt *Politicians* is turned into fooliſhneſs: For *there is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the Lord.*

But the Divine Wiſdom, being founded upon infinite knowledge, is thereby ſecur'd againſt all poſſibility of error and miſtake. God perfectly knows the natures and the powers of all his Creatures, and therefore can never be miſtaken in the uſe and application of them to any of his purpoſes: So that none of his deſigns of love and mercy to the Sons of Men can miſcarry for want of good contrivance, or wiſe conduct.

And as he is perfectly *wiſe* to contrive our happineſs, ſo is he infinitely *powerful* to effect it, and to remove out of the way all the obſtacles and impediments of it. We may underſtand many times what would conduce to our happineſs, but may not be able to compaſs it; but nothing is out of the reach of Omnipotency: Many things are difficult to us, but nothing is too hard for God: Many things are impoſſible with us, but *with God all things are poſſible.* For He is the Fountain and Original of all Power, from whom it is deriv'd and upon whom it depends, and to whom it is perfectly ſubject and ſubordinate: He can do all things at once, and in an inſtant, and with the greateſt eaſe; and no created Power can put any difficulty in his way, much leſs make any effectual reſiſtance; becauſe Omnipotency can check, and countermand, and bear down before it all other Powers.

So that if God be on our ſide, who can be againſt us? We may ſafely *commit our ſouls into his hands, for he is able to keep that which is committed to him.* He can give us all good things, and deliver us from all evil, for *his is the Kingdom and the glorious Power.* Though all Creatures ſhould fail us, we may rely upon God, and live upon his All-ſufficiency for our ſupply; and may ſay with the *Prophet, Though the Fig-tree ſhould not bloſſom, neither Fruit be in the Vine; though the labour of the Olive ſhould fail, and the Fields ſhould yield no meat; though the Flock ſhould be cut off from the Fold, and there ſhould be no Herd in the Stalls; yet would I rejoyce in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation.*

II. *Secondly*, As God is an All-ſufficient Good, ſo He is perfect Goodneſs. He is willing to communicate happineſs to us, and to employ his Power and Wiſdom for our Good. He made us that he might make us happy, and nothing can hinder us from being ſo but our ſelves. Such is his goodneſs, that *he would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth:* And when we have provoked him by our ſins, *he is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance:* For *he delighteth not in the death of a ſinner; but rather that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live.* So that if any of us be miſerable, it is our own choice; if we periſh, our deſtruction is of our ſelves: For as the *Wiſeman*, in one of the *Apocryphal* Books, ſays excellently, *God made not death, neither hath he pleaſure in the deſtruction of the living: But men ſeek death in the errour of their life, and pull deſtruction upon themſelves, with the works of their own hands.*

So great is the goodneſs of God to mankind, that he hath omitted nothing that is neceſſary to our happineſs. He deſign'd it for us at firſt, and to that end he hath endowed us with Powers and Faculties whereby we are capable of knowing, and loving, and obeying, and enjoying *Him* the chief Good. And when we had forfeited all this by the wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience of the firſt Parents of Mankind, and were miſerably bruiſed and maimed by their fall, God of his infinite mercy was pleas'd to reſtore us to a new capacity of happineſs, by ſending his only Son to ſuffer in our nature, and in our ſtead; and thereby to become *a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*, and *the Author of eternal Salvation to them that believe and obey him:* And he hath likewiſe promiſed to give us his Holy Spirit, to enable us to that Faith and Obedience which the Goſpel requires of us, as the neceſſary conditions of our eternal Salvation.

III. *Thirdly*, God is alſo a firm and unchangeable Good. Notwithſtanding his infinite Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs, we might be miſerable if God were mutable. For that cannot be a happineſs which depends upon uncertainties, and perhaps one of the greateſt aggravations of miſery is to fall from happineſs, to have been once happy and afterwards to ceaſe to be ſo: And that would unavoidably happen to us, if the cauſe of our happineſs could change, and the foundation of it be removed. If God could be otherwiſe than powerful, and wiſe, and good, all our hopes of happineſs would be ſhaken, and would fall to the ground. But the Divine Nature is not ſubject to any change: As he is *the Father of Lights*, and *the Author of every* *good and perfect gift*, ſo *with him is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning.* All the things of this World are mutable, and for that reaſon, had they no other imperfection belonging to them, cannot make us happy.

IV. *Fourthly*, God is ſuch a good as none can deprive us of and take away from us. If the things of this World were unchangeable in their nature, and not liable to any decay, yet they cannot make us happy; becauſe we may be cheated of them by fraud, or robb'd of them by violence: But God cannot be taken from us. Nothing but our Sins can part God and us: *Who ſhall ſeparate us*, ſaith the *Apoſtle, from the love of God? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword?* We may be ſtripp'd of all our worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, by the violence of men; but none of all theſe can ſeparate us from God: *I am perſwaded*, as the *Apoſtle* goes on *with great triumph, that neither death nor life; nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers; nor heighth, nor depth, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor any other Creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God which is in Chriſt* Jeſus, *our Lord. Nor any other Creature:* Here is a ſufficient induction of particulars, and nothing left out of this Catalogue but one, and *that* is *Sin*, which is none of God's *Creatures*, but our own: *This* indeed deliberately conſented to, and wilfully continued in, will finally part God and us, and for ever hinder us from being happy. Rom. 8. 35. Ver. 38, 39.

But if we be careful to avoid this, which only can ſeparate between God and us, nothing can deprive us of Him: The aids and influences of his Grace none can intercept and hinder: the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit none can take from us: All other things may leave us and forſake us: We may be debarr'd of our beſt friends, and baniſh'd from all our acquaintance; but men can ſend us no whither from the preſence of God: Our Communication with Heaven cannot be prevented or interrupted. Our Prayers and our Souls will always find the way thither from the uttermoſt parts of the Earth.

V. *Fifthly*, God is an eternal God: And nothing but what is ſo can make us happy. Man having an immortal Spirit, and being deſign'd for an endleſs duration, muſt have a happineſs proportionable: For which reaſon nothing in this World can make us happy, becauſe we ſhall abide and remain after it: When a very few years are paſt and gone, and much ſooner for any thing we know, all the things of this World will leave us, or elſe we ſhall be taken away from them, *But God is from everlaſting to everlaſting: He is the ſame, and his years fail not:* Therefore well might *David* fix his happineſs upon God alone, and ſay, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee: When my heart faileth, and my ſtrength faileth, God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

VI. *Sixthly*, God is able to ſupport and comfort us, in every condition, and under all the accidents and adverſities of humane Life. Outward afflictions may hurt our Body, but they cannot reach our Soul; and ſo long as *that* remains unwounded, *the ſpirit of a man can bear his infirmities.* God is intimate to our Souls, and hath ſecret ways whereby to convey the joys and comforts of his Holy Spirit into our Hearts, under the bittereſt afflictions and ſharpeſt ſufferings: He can enable us by his Grace *to poſſeſs our ſouls in patience*, when all other things are taken from us; When there is nothing but trouble about us, He can *give us peace and joy in believing:* When we are *perſecuted, afflicted*, and *tormented*, He can give us that raviſhing ſight of the Glories of another World, that ſtedfaſt aſſurance of a future Bleſſedneſs, as ſhall quite extinguiſh all ſenſe of preſent ſufferings: How did many of the primitive *Chriſtian Martyrs*, in the midſt of their torments, and under the very pangs of death *rejoice in the hope of the glory of God?*

There are none of us but may happen to fall into thoſe circumſtances of danger, and of bodily pains and ſufferings, as to have no hopes of relief and comfort but from God; none in all the World to truſt to but *Him* only: And in the greateſt Evils that can befal us in this life, He is a ſure refuge and ſanctuary; and to repeat the words of the *Pſalmiſt* after the *Text*, *When our heart fails, and our ſtrength fails, God is the ſtrength of our hearts, and our portion for ever.*

Now what would any of us do in ſuch a Caſe, if it were not for God? Humane nature is liable to deſperate ſtraits and exigencies: And he is not happy who is not provided againſt the worſt that may happen. It is ſad to be reduced to ſuch a condition, as to be deſtitute of all comfort and hope: And yet men may be brought to that extremity, that if it were not for God they would not know which way to turn themſelves, or how to entertain their thoughts with any comfortable conſiderations under their preſent anguiſh.

All men naturally reſort to God in extremity, and cry out to him for help: Even the moſt Profane and Atheiſtical, when they are deſtitute of all other comfort, will run to God, and take hold of him, and cling about him. But *God hath no pleaſure in fools*; in thoſe who neglect and deſpiſe him in their proſperity, though they owe that alſo entirely to him; but when the evil day comes, then they lay hold of him as their only refuge: When all things go well with them, *God is not in all their thoughts*; but *in their affliction they will ſeek him early: Then they will cry, Lord, Lord*; but *he will ſay to them in that day, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity, for I know you not.*

Here will be the great unhappineſs of ſuch perſons, that God will then appear terrible to them, ſo as they ſhall not be able, when they look up to him, to abide his frowns: And at the ſame time that they are forc'd to acknowledge him, and to ſupplicate to him for mercy and forgiveneſs, they ſhall be ready to deſpair of it: *Then*, thoſe terrible threatnings of God's Word will come to their minds; *Becauſe I called, and ye refuſed; I ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye ſet at nought all my counſel, and would have none of my reproof; I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you: Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counſel, they deſpiſed all my reproof: Therefore ſhall they eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices: The eaſe of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them, and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them.* To which I will add that terrible Paſſage in the *Prophet*, concerning the perverſe and obſtinate *Jews*; *They are a People of no underſtanding, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will ſhew them no favour.* And men are miſerable Creatures indeed, when God their *Maker* doth abandon them, and hath ſo far hardened his heart againſt them, that he can have no pity and compaſſion for them.

Prov. 1. 24, 25, &c.

Iſa. 27. 11.

Seventhly and *Laſtly*, Which is conſequent upon all the reſt, God is ſuch a Good as can give perfect reſt and tranquility to our minds. And that which cannot do this, though it had all the Properties before mentioned, cannot make us happy. For he is not happy who does not think himſelf ſo, whatever cauſe he may have to think ſo. Now what in reaſon can give us diſquiet, if we do firmly believe that there is a God, and that his Providence rules and governs all things for the beſt; and that God is all that to good Men which hath now been ſaid of Him:. Why ſhould not our minds be in perfect repoſe, when we are ſecure of the chief Good, and have found out that which can make us happy, and is willing to make us ſo, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, and by our wilful obſtinacy and rebellion againſt him, do not oppoſe and fruſtrate this deſign?

If a conſiderate Man were permitted to his own choice, to wiſh the greateſt good to himſelf that he could poſſibly deviſe; after he had ſearched Heaven and Earth, the reſult of all his wiſhes would be that there were *juſt* ſuch a Being as we muſt neceſſarily conceive God to be: Nor would he chuſe any other Friend or Benefactor; any other Protector for himſelf or Governour for the whole World, than infinite Power conducted and managed by infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs; which is the true Notion of a God: After all his enquiry he would come to the *Pſalmiſt's* Concluſion here in the Text, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.*

Vain Man is apt to ſeek for happineſs elſewhere, but this proceeds from want of due conſideration: For when all things are well weigh'd, and all accounts rightly caſt up and adjuſted, we ſhall at laſt ſettle in *David's* reſoluti-
Pſal.4.6,7,8. on of that great *Queſtion, What is the chief Good of Man? There be many*, ſays he, *that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good?* That is, Men are generally inquiſitive after happineſs, but greatly divided in their Opinions about it: Moſt men place it in the preſent enjoyments of this World, but *David* for his part pitches upon God, in whom he was fully convinc'd that the happineſs of Man does conſiſt: *There be many that ſay, Who will ſhew us any good? Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us: Thou haſt put gladneſs in my heart, more than in the time that their Corn and Wine increaſed.* The great joy of the men of this World is in a plentiful Harveſt, and the abundance of the good things of this life: But *David* had found that which gave more joy and gladneſs to his heart, the favour of God and the *light of his countenance:* This gave perfect reſt and tranquillity to his mind, ſo that he needed not to enquire any further: For ſo it follows in the next words, *I will both lay me down in peace, and reſt; for thou, Lord, only makeſt me to dwell in ſafety:* The *Hebrew* word ſignifies *confidence* or *ſecurity:* Here, and no where elſe, his mind found reſt, and was in perfect eaſe and ſecurity.

I ſhall now only make two or three *Inferences* from this Diſcourſe, and ſo conclude.

Firſt, This plainly ſhews us the great unreaſonableneſs and folly of *Atheſm*, which would baniſh the belief of God and his Providence out of the World: Which as it is moſt impious in reſpect of God, ſo is it moſt malicious to men; becauſe it ſtrikes at the very foundation of our happineſs, and perfectly undermines it. For if there were no God, Man would evidently be the moſt unhappy of all other Beings here below; becauſe his unhappineſs would be laid in the very frame of his nature, in that which diſtinguiſhes him from all other Beings below him, I mean in his Reaſon and Underſtanding: And he would be ſo much more miſerable than the Beaſts, by how much he hath a farther reach, and a larger proſpect of future evils; a quicker apprehenſion, and a deeper and more laſting reſentment of them.

So that if any man could ſee reaſon to ſtagger his belief of a God, or of his Providence, as I am ſure there is infinite reaſon to the contrary; yet the belief of theſe things is ſo much for the intereſt, and comfort, and happineſs of Mankind, that a Wiſe man would be heartily troubled to part with a Principle ſo favourable to his quiet, and that does ſo exactly anſwer all the natural deſires and hopes and fears of Men, and is ſo equally calculated both for our comfort in this World, and for our happineſs in the other. For when a man's thoughts have ranged and wandered as far as they can, his mind can find no reſt, no probable foundation of happineſs but God only; no other reaſonable, no nor tolerable *Hypotheſis* and *Scheme* of things for a Wiſe man to rely upon, and to live and die by. For no other Principle but this, firmly believed, and truly lived up to by an anſwerable practice, was ever able to ſupport the generality of Mankind, and to miniſter true conſolation to them under the calamities of life, and the pangs of death.

And if there were not ſomething real in the Principles of Religion, it is impoſſible that they ſhould have ſo remarkable and ſo regular an effect to ſupport our minds in every condition, upon ſo great a number of perſons of different degrees of underſtanding, of all ranks and conditions, young and old, learned and unlearned, in ſo many diſtant places, and in all Ages of the World, the Records whereof are come down to us: I ſay ſo real, and ſo frequent, and ſo regular an effect as this is, cannot with any colour of reaſon be aſcribed either to blind Chance, or meer Imagination, but muſt have a real, and regular, and uniform cauſe proportionable to ſo great and general an effect.

I remember that *Grotius*, in his excellent *Book of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, hath this obſervation, That God did not intend that the Principles of Religion ſhould have the utmoſt evidence that any thing is capable of, and ſuch as is ſufficient to anſwer and bear down all ſorts of captious Cavils and objections againſt it; but ſo much as is abundantly ſufficient to ſatisfie a ſober and impartial Enquirer after Truth, one that hath no other intereſt but to find out Truth; and when he hath found it, to yield to it: If it were otherwiſe, and the Principles of Religion were as glaring and evident as the Sun ſhining at Noon-day, as there could hardly be any vertue in ſuch a Faith, ſo Infidelity would be next to an impoſſibility.

All that I would expect from any man, that ſhall ſay that he cannot ſee ſufficient reaſon to believe the *Being* and the *Providence* of God, is this; That he would offer ſome other *Principles*; that he would advance any other *Hypotheſis* and *Scheme* of things that is more agreeable to the common and natural Notions of Men, and to all Appearances of things in the World; and that does bid more fairly for the comfort and happineſs of Mankind, than theſe Principles of the *Being* of a God, and of his watchful *Providence* over the children of men, do plainly do: And till this be clearly done, the Principles of Religion which have generally been received by Mankind, and have obtain'd in the World in all Ages, cannot fairly be diſcarded, and ought not to be diſturbed and put out of Poſſeſſion. And this, I think, puts this whole matter upon a very fair and reaſonable Iſſue, and that nothing more needs to be ſaid concerning it.

Secondly, From what hath been ſaid, in the foregoing Diſcourſe, it naturally follows, That God is the only Object of our truſt and confidence, and therefore to him alone, and to no other, we ought to addreſs all our Prayers and Supplications *for mercy and grace to help in time of need.* But now, according to the Doctrine and Practice of the Church of *Rome*, the *Pſalmiſt* here puts a very odd and ſtrange Queſtion, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* To which they muſt give a quite different anſwer from what the *Pſalmiſt* plainly intended; namely, that God was the ſole Object of his hope and truſt, and that upon Him alone he relied as his only comfort and happineſs: But to this Aſſertion of the *Pſalmiſt* the Church of *Rome* can by no means agree: They un- 2.

derſtand this matter much better than the *Pſalmiſt* did; namely, that beſides God there are in Heaven innumerable *Angels* and *Saints*, in whom we are to repoſe great truſt and confidence, and to whom alſo we are to addreſs ſolemn Prayers and Supplications, not only for temporal good things, but for the pardon of our Sins, for the increaſe of our Graces, and for eternal Life: That there are in Heaven particular *Advocates* and *Patrons* for all exigencies and occaſions, againſt all ſorts of dangers and diſeaſes, for all Graces and Vertues, and, in a word, for all temporal, ſpiritual, and eternal Bleſſings; to whom we may apply our ſelves, without troubling God and our Bleſſed Saviour, who alſo is *God bleſſed for evermore*, by preſuming upon every occaſion to make our immediate Addreſſes to him: For as they would make us believe, though *Abraham* was ignorant of it, and *David* knew it not, the bleſſed Spirits above, both Angels and Saints, do not only intercede with God for us for all ſorts of Bleſſings, but we may make direct and immediate Addreſſes to them to beſtow theſe Bleſſings upon us: For ſo they do in the Church of *Rome*, as is evident, beyond all denial, from ſeveral of their *Prayers* in their moſt publick and authentick *Liturgies*.

They would indeed fain palliate this matter, by telling us, that by theſe direct and immediate Addreſſes to Angels and Saints to beſtow Grace and eternal Life upon them, they mean no more but only to pray to them that they would be pleaſed to intercede with God for theſe Bleſſings to be beſtowed upon them by their Mediation: But if they mean no more, why do they ſay more than they mean? Why do they uſe ſuch expreſſions as to the common ſenſe and underſtanding of Mankind do ſignifie a great deal more than they ſay they mean; ſuch expreſſions, as they themſelves do acknowledge, if they be underſtood according to the moſt obvious ſence of the words, would render them guilty of flat Idolatry? Eſpecially when they know, that they are charged with Idolatry upon this account; and ſince to clear themſelves of it they will not alter their Prayers, they juſtly lie under the ſuſpicion of it.

And yet admitting what they ſay in this matter to be true, and that by theſe expreſſions in their *Prayers* they intend no more but the ſolemn Invocation of Angels and Saints, that they would intercede with God to beſtow theſe Bleſſings upon them for the ſake of their Merits, and upon their Mediation: Yet this ſurely is a great deal too much, and cannot be done without a high entrenchment upon the *Office* of the only *Mediator between God and Man, the Man Chriſt Jeſus*: But let them not deceive themſelves, *God is not mocked: The Lord our God is a jealous God*, and *He will not give his Glory to another*.

I have not yet inſtanced in the groſſeſt part of their *Superſtition*, not to ſay down-right Idolatry, in this kind; I mean, in their extravagant Worſhip of *the bleſſed Virgin* and *Mother of our Lord*; whom they blaſphemouſly call the *Queen of Heaven*; and whom, by a new ſtyle, unknown to the *Scriptures* and *Primitive Antiquity*, they think to dignifie with the *modiſh* Title of *our Lady*; as if that could be any addition of honour to *Her*, whom the *Angel* declared to be *bleſſed among Women*: Who, if ſhe knew any thing of the follies of Her Worſhippers here below, with what diſdain and indignation, do we think She hears thoſe infinite *Prayers* that are made to Her, and that *Sacrilegious* Worſhip which is given Her in that Church, and which makes both pages of their Religion; and which for the frequency of it, both in their publick and private Devotions, is very much beyond what they give to God and Chriſt? As if there were *none in Heaven but She*, nor *any thing upon Earth* to be worſhipped in compariſon of *Her Image*.

Nay, ſo far have they carried this extravagant Folly, and how much farther they would have carried it, had not the *Reformation* given a check to it, God only knows: So far, I ſay, have they proceeded in this Folly, as, in that famous *Book* of their *Devotions*, call'd *Our Lady's Pſalter*, not only to apply to Her ſome part of this *Pſalm*, out of which I have taken my *Text*, beginning it thus: *How good is God to* Iſrael, *to them that worſhip his Bleſſed Mother?* But they have likewiſe profanely *burleſqued*, I cannot afford it a better term, this whole *Book* of *Pſalms*, applying to *Her* almoſt the higheſt things that are there ſaid concerning *God* and our *Bleſſed Saviour*. *Hear*, O *Heavens*, *and give ear*, O *Earth*, *and be ye horribly aſtoniſhed*, to ſee the beſt and wiſeſt Religion in the World transform'd into Superſtition and Folly; and to ſee the moſt learned Perſons in that Communion ſet themſelves in good earneſt to juſtifie all theſe follies and abſurdities by a grave and groundleſs pretence to *Infallibility*.

3. *Thirdly* and *Laſtly*, This ſhews us how neceſſary the favour of God is to every man's happineſs: And there is but one way to gain his friendſhip and favour, by becoming holy and good as He is: Then may we rejoyce and glory in God, as the *Pſalmiſt* here does, and ſay, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee.* A wicked Man dreads God above all things in the World, and he has great reaſon to do ſo: *For he is not a God that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall evil dwell with him: The fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in his ſight, he hateth all the workers of iniquity.* When by ſin we depart from God, we forſake our own happineſs: *Salvation is far from the wicked*, ſays *David*. And again, a little after the *Text*, *They that are far from thee ſhall periſh, but it is good for me to draw near to God.* Now by Holineſs and Goodneſs we draw near to *Him*, who alone can make us happy. Pſal. 119.

It is certainly the common intereſt of mankind there ſhould be a God, becauſe we cannot poſſibly be happy without Him: But then it is no man's Intereſt to be wicked, becauſe thereby we make *Him* our Enemy *in whoſe favour is life*, and upon whom all our hopes of happineſs do depend.

To conclude, If we would have God for our Happineſs, we muſt be ſure to make him our Friend; and then we may promiſe to our ſelves all thoſe advantages which the Friendſhip of ſo great and powerful a Patron can give us: And there is but one way to eſtabliſh a firm Friendſhip between God and us, and that is, by doing his Will, and living in obedience to his Laws: *Ye are my friends*, ſaith our bleſſed Lord, *if ye do whatſoever I command you: This is the love of God*, ſaith St. *John*, *that we keep his commandments*: And to love God is the way to be made partakers of thoſe glorious *things which God hath prepared for them that love Him: Such as eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man:* Which God of his infinite Goodneſs grant we may all at laſt be made partakers of, for his Mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*: To whom with thee, O *Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLI.

A Thankſgiving-Sermon for the late Victory at Sea.

Preached before the

King and Queen

AT

WHITEHALL,

October the 27th. 1692.

JER. IX. 23, 24.

Thus ſaith the Lord, Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he underſtandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth: For in theſe things I delight ſaith the Lord.

THeſe words are a meſſage from God ſent by his Prophet to the People of the *Jews*, who truſted in their own *Wiſdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches*, for their ſafety and preſervation from that Deſtruction which, in the former part of this *Chapter*, God had threaten'd to bring upon them by the King of *Babylon*. To take them off from this vain confidence is this Meſſage ſent to them, *Thus ſaith the Lord, Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he underſtandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the earth: For in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord.*

In the handling of theſe Words, I ſhall abſtract from the particular Occaſion of them, and only conſider the general Truth contained in them: Which I ſhall do under theſe two Heads.

Firſt, What we are not to glory in: *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches.*

Secondly, What it is that is matter of true glory: *But let him that glorieth glory in this, That he underſtandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth.*

I. *What we are not to glory in.* The *Text* inſtanceth in *three* things which are the great Idols of Mankind, and in which they are very apt to pride themſelves and to place their confidence, namely, *Wiſdom*, and *Might*, and *Riches.* I ſhall conſider theſe ſeverally, and ſhew how little reaſon there is to glory in any of them. I.

1. *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom.* This may comprehend both humane Knowledge, and likewiſe Prudence in the management of affairs. We will ſuppoſe both theſe to be intended here by the name of *Wiſdom, Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom,* that is, neither in the largeneſs and compaſs of his Knowledge and Underſtanding, nor in his Skill and Dexterity in the contrivance and conduct of humane Affairs; and that for theſe *two* reaſons.

1. *Firſt*, Becauſe the higheſt pitch of humane Knowledge and Wiſdom is very imperfect.

Secondly, Becauſe when Knowledge and Wiſdom are with much difficulty in any competent meaſure attained, how eaſily are they loſt?

Firſt, *The higheſt pitch of humane knowledge and wiſdom is very imperfect.* Our Ignorance doth vaſtly exceed our Knowledge at the beſt. Wiſdom in any tolerable degree is difficult to be attain'd, but perfection in it utterly to be deſpair'd of. Where is there to be found ſo ſtrong and ſound a Head, as hath no ſoft place; ſo perfect, ſo clear an Underſtanding as hath no flaw, no dark Water in it? How hard a matter is it to be truly wiſe? And yet there are ſo many Pretenders to Wiſdom as would almoſt tempt a man to think that nothing is eaſier. Men do frequently murmur and repine at the unequal diſtribution of other things, as of health and ſtrength, of power and riches: But if we will truſt the judgment of moſt men concerning themſelves, nothing is more equally ſhar'd among Mankind than a good degree of Wiſdom and Underſtanding. Many will grant others to be ſuperiour to them in other gifts of Nature, as in bodily ſtrength and ſtature; and in the Gifts of Fortune, as in Riches and Honour; becauſe the difference between one man and another in theſe qualities is many times ſo groſs and palbable, that no body hath the face to deny it: But very few in compariſon, unleſs it be in mere complement and civility, will yield others to be wiſer than themſelves; and yet the difference in this alſo is for the moſt part very viſible to every body but themſelves.

So that true Wiſdom is a thing very extraordinary. Happy are they that have it: And, next to them, not thoſe many that think they have it, but thoſe few that are ſenſible of their own defects and imperfections, and know that they have it not.

And among all the kinds of Wiſdom none is more nice and difficult, and meets with more frequent diſappointments, than that which men are moſt apt to pride themſelves in, I mean *Political* wiſdom and prudence; becauſe it depends upon ſo many contingent Cauſes, any one of which failing the beſt laid deſign breaks and falls in pieces: It depends upon the uncertain wills and fickle humours, the miſtaken and mutable intereſts of men, which are perpetually ſhifting from one point to another, ſo that no body knows where to find them: Beſides an unaccountable mixture of that which the *Heathen* call'd *Fortune*, but we *Chriſtians* by its true name, the *Providence* of God; which does frequently interpoſe in humane Affairs, and loves to *confound the wiſdom of the wiſe*, and *to turn their counſels into fooliſhneſs.*

Of this we have a moſt remarkable Example in *Achitophel*, of whoſe wiſdom the *Scripture* gives this extraordinary Teſtimony, That *the counſel which he counſelled in thoſe days was as if one had enquired at the Oracle of God: Such was all the counſel of* Achitophel *both with* David *and with* Abſalom. It ſeems he gave very good counſel alſo to *Abſalom*, and becauſe he would not follow it was diſcontented to that degree as to lay violent hands upon himſelf: And now who would pride himſelf in being ſo very wiſe as to be able to give the beſt counſel in the world, and yet ſo very weak as to make away himſelf, becauſe he to whom it was given was not wiſe enough to take it?

The like miſcarriages often happen in point of Military skill and prudence. A great *Prince* or *General* is ſometimes ſo very cautious and wary, that nothing can provoke him to a Battel; and then at another time, and perhaps in another Element, ſo raſh and wilful that nothing can hinder him from fighting and being beaten: As if the two Elements made the difference; and caution were great wiſdom at Land, and confidence and preſumption great prudence at Sea. But the true reaſon of theſe things lies much deeper, in the ſecret Providence of Almighty God, who when he pleaſes can ſo govern and over-rule both the underſtandings and the wills of men, as ſhall beſt ſerve his own wiſe purpoſe and deſign.

And as the higheſt pitch of humane Wiſdom is very imperfect in it ſelf, ſo is it much more ſo in compariſon with the Divine knowledge and wiſdom: Compar'd with this it is mere folly, and leſs than the underſtanding and wiſdom of a child to that of the wiſeſt man. *The fooliſhneſs of God*, ſays St. *Paul*, *is wiſer than men*, that is, the leaſt grain of Divine wiſdom is infinitely beyond all the wiſdom of men: But in oppoſition to the wiſdom of God, the wiſdom of men is leſs than nothing and vanity. Let men deſign things never ſo prudently, and make them never ſo ſure, even to the *Popiſh* and *French* degree of infallibility; let them reckon upon it as *a Blow that cannot fail:* Yet after all, the counſel of the Lord *that* ſhall ſtand, and he will do all his pleaſure; *for there is no wiſdom, nor underſtanding, nor counſel againſt the Lord.* 1 Cor. 2. 15

Job 28. 12. And now we may ask the Queſtion which *Job* does, *Where ſhall wiſdom be found, and where is the place of underſtanding?* And we muſt anſwer it as he does, Ch. 28. 12. *It is not to be found in the land of the living:* unleſs it be that one infallible Point of Wiſdom to which God directs every man, and of which every man Job 28. 28. is capable, *viz.* Religion and the Fear of God, *Unto man he ſaid, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom; and to depart from evil is underſtanding.*

Secondly, *When knowledge and wiſdom are with great difficulty in any competent meaſure attain'd, how eaſily are they loſt?* By a diſeaſe, by a blow upon the head; by a ſudden and violent paſſion, which may diſorder the ſtrongeſt Brain and confound the cleareſt Underſtanding in a moment: Nay even the exceſs of knowledge and wiſdom, eſpecially if attended with pride, as too often it is, is very dangerous, and does many times border upon diſtraction and run into madneſs: Like an *Athletick* conſtitution and perfect ſtate of health, which is obſerv'd by *Phyſicians* to verge upon ſome dangerous diſeaſe, and to be a forerunner of it.

And when a man's Underſtanding is once craz'd and ſhatter'd, how are the fineſt notions and thoughts of the wiſeſt man blunder'd and broken, perplex'd and entangled? like a puzled lump of ſilk, ſo that the man cannot draw out a thought to any length, but is forc'd to break it off and to begin at another end. Upon all which and many more accounts, *Let not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom,* which is ſo very imperfect; ſo hard to be attain'd, and yet ſo eaſie to be loſt.

2. *Neither let the mighty man glory in his might.* Which whether it be meant of natural ſtrength of body, or of military force and power, how weak and imperfect is it, and how frequently foil'd by an unequal ſtrength? 2.

If we underſtand it of the natural ſtrength of men's bodies, how little reaſon is there to glory in that, in which ſo many of the Creatures below us do by ſo many degrees excel us? In that, which may ſo many ways be loſt; by ſickneſs, by a maim, and by many other external Accidents; and which however will decay of it ſelf, and by Age ſink into infirmity and weakneſs.

And how little reaſon is there to glory in that, which is ſo frequently foil'd by an unequal ſtrength? of which *Goliah* is a famous inſtance. When he defied the Hoſt of *Iſrael*, and would needs have the matter decided by ſingle Combate, God inſpired *David* to accept the Challenge; who though he was no wiſe comparable to him in ſtrength, and would have been nothing in his hands in cloſe fight, yet God directed him to aſſail him at a diſtance by a weapon that was too hard for him, a ſtone out of a ſling, which ſtruck the Giant in the forehead, and brought his unwieldy bulk down to the Earth.

Or if by *might* we underſtand military force and power, how little likewiſe is that to be gloried in? conſidering the uncertain events of War, and how very often and remarkably the Providence of God doth interpoſe to caſt the Victory on the unlikely ſide. It is *Solomon*'s obſervation, that ſuch are the interpoſitions of Divine Providence in humane Affairs, that the Event of things is many times not at all anſwerable to the power and probability of ſecond Cauſes: *I returned*, ſays he, *and ſaw under the Sun, that the race is not to the ſwift, nor the battel to the ſtrong.* Eccl. 9.11.

And one way, among many others, whereby the Providence of God doth often interpoſe to decide the Events of War, is by a remarkable change of the Seaſons and Weather in favour of one ſide: As by ſending great Snows, or violent Rains, to hinder the early motion and march of a powerful Army, to the diſappointment or prejudice of ſome great Deſign: By remarkable Winds and Storms at Sea, to prevent the Conjunction of a powerful Fleet: And by governing all theſe for a long time together ſo viſibly to the Advantage of one Side as utterly to defeat the well-laid deſign of the other. Of all which, by the great mercy and goodneſs of God to us, we have had the happy experience in all our late ſignal Deliverances and Victories.

And here I cannot but take notice of a paſſage to this purpoſe in the Book of *Job*: Which may deſerve our more attentive regard and conſideration, becauſe I take this Book to be incomparably the moſt ancient of all other, and much elder than *Moſes*: And yet it is written with as lively a ſenſe of the Providence of God, and as noble Figures and Flights of Eloquence as perhaps any Book extant in the World. The *Paſſage* I mean is, where God to convince *Job* of his ignorance in the ſecrets of Nature and Providence poſeth him with many hard Queſtions, and with this amongſt the reſt, *Haſt thou entred into the treaſures of the Snow? haſt thou ſeen the treaſures of the Hail? which I have reſerv'd againſt the time of trouble, againſt the Day of Battel and War.* The meaning of which is, that the Providence of God doth ſometimes interpoſe to determine the Events of War, by governing the Seaſons and the Weather, and by making the Snows and Rains, *the Winds and Storms to fulfil his word* and to execute his pleaſure. Job 28. 32,33.

Of this we have a remarkable Inſtance in the defeat of *Siſera's* mighty Army; againſt whom, in the Song of *Deborah*, the *Stars* are ſaid to *have fought in their courſes:* The expreſſion is *Poetical*, but the plain meaning of it is, that by mighty and ſudden Rains, which the common Opinion did aſcribe to a ſpecial influence of the *Planets*, the River of *Kiſhon*, near which *Siſera's* Army lay, was ſo raiſed and ſwoln as to drown the greateſt part of that huge Hoſt. For ſo *Deborah* explains the *fighting of the Stars in their courſes againſt Siſera: They fought*, ſays *ſhe*, *from Heaven, the Stars in their courſes fought againſt* Siſera, *the River of* Kiſhon *ſwept them away:* As if the Stars, which were ſuppoſed by their influence to have cauſed thoſe ſudden and extraordinary Rains, had ſet themſelves in Battel array againſt *Siſera* and his Army.

Therefore, *let not the mighty man glory in his might*, which is ſo ſmall in it ſelf, but in oppoſition to God is weakneſs and nothing. *The weakneſs of God*, ſays St. *Paul*, *is ſtronger than men.* All power to do miſchief is but impotence, Pſal.52.1. and therefore no matter of boaſting: *Why boaſteſt thou thy ſelf, thou Tyrant, that thou art able to do miſchief? the goodneſs of God endureth continually:* The goodneſs of God is too hard for the pride and malice of man, and will laſt and hold out when that has tir'd and ſpent it ſelf.

Thirdly, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches.* In theſe, men are apt to pride themſelves: even the meaneſt and pooreſt ſpirits, who have nothing to be proud of but their money, when they have got good ſtore of that together, how will they ſwell and ſtrut? as if becauſe they are *rich* and *increaſed in goods* they *wanted nothing*.

But we may do well to conſider, that Riches are things without us; not the real Excellencies of our Nature, but the accidental Ornaments of our Fortune. If they deſcend upon us, they are the Priviledge of our Birth, not the effect of our Wiſdom and Induſtry; and thoſe things in the procurement whereof we had no hand, we can hardly call our own: And if they be the fruit of our own prudent induſtry, that is no ſuch matter of glorying; becauſe men of much ſlower underſtandings do commonly out-do others in diligence and drudging, their minds lying more level to the low deſign of being rich.

At the beſt, Riches are uncertain. *Charge them*, ſays St. *Paul*, *that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain riches:* Men have little reaſon to pride themſelves, or to place their confidence in that which is uncertain, and even next to that which is not: So the wiſe man ſpeaks of Prov.23.5. Riches, *Wilt thou ſet thine heart upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themſelves wings, and fly as an Eagle towards heaven:* He expreſſes it in ſuch a manner, as if a rich man ſate brooding over an Eſtate till it was *fledg'd* and had gotten it ſelf wings to fly away.

But that which is the moſt ſtinging conſideration of all is, that many men have an evil eye upon a good Eſtate; ſo that inſtead of being the means of our happineſs, it may prove the occaſion of our ruin: So the ſame Wiſe man Eccl. 5.13. obſerves, *There is a ſore evil which I have ſeen under the Sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.* And it is not without example, that a very rich man hath been excepted out of a general Pardon, both as to Life and Eſtate, for no other viſible reaſon but his vaſt and overgrown Fortune: So Prov.1.18. *Solomon* obſerves to us again, *Such are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain, which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.* And why ſhould any man be proud of his danger, of that which one time or other may be the certain and only cauſe of his ruin? A man may be too rich to be forgiven a fault which would never have been proſecuted againſt a man of a middle Fortune. For theſe reaſons, and a great many more, *Let not the rich man glory in his riches.*

II. I proceed to conſider, *What it is that is matter of true glory? But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth: For in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord.* II.

That he underſtandeth and knoweth me: Here are two words uſed to expreſs the thing more fully, *underſtanding* and *knowledge*; which ſeem not only to import right apprehenſions of the Being, and Providence, and Perfections of God; but likewiſe a lively ſenſe of theſe things, and affections ſuitable to theſe apprehenſions.

That he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, that is, the Creator and the Sovereign Governour of the World.

Which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth.

The beſt Knowledge of Religion, and that which is the foundation of all the reſt, is the Knowledge of the Divine Nature and Perfections: eſpecially of thoſe which are moſt proper for our imitation; and ſuch are thoſe mention'd in the *Text*, *loving-kindneſs*, and *judgment*, and *righteouſneſs*; which we may diſtinguiſh thus: *Loving-kindneſs* comprehends God's milder Attributes, his *Goodneſs*, and *Mercy*, and *Patience*: *Judgment* ſignifies his ſeverer dealings with men, whether in the chaſtiſement of his People, or in the remarkable Puniſhment of great Offenders for example and warning to others: *Righteouſneſs* ſeems to be a word of a larger ſignification, and to denote that univerſal Rectitude of the Divine Nature which appears in all the Adminiſtrations of his Providence here below; for the Text ſpeaks of the Exerciſe of theſe Perfections in this World: *which exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth.*

Several of the Perfections of the Divine Nature are incommunicable to a Creature, and therefore cannot be thought to be propoſed to us for a Pattern; as *ſelf-exiſtence, independence*, and *all-ſufficiency*; the *eternity*, and the *immenſity* of the Divine Being: to be the *original Cauſe* of all other things, and the *Sovereign Governour* of the whole World: For God only is ſufficient for *that*; and to be a Match for all the World, a *nec pluribus impar,* is not a *Motto* fit for a mortal man. A Creature may ſwell with pride till it burſt, before it can ſtretch it ſelf to this pitch of Power and Greatneſs: It is an inſufferable Preſumption, and a ſottiſh Ignorance of the neceſſary Bounds and Limits of our Being, to think to reſemble God in theſe Perfections: This was the Ambition of *Lucifer*, to *aſcend into Heaven*, and to *be like the moſt High.*

In our imitation of God we muſt ſtill keep within the ſtation of Creatures; not affecting an *independency* and *ſoveraignty* like God, and to be *omnipotent* as he is: *Haſt thou an arm like God, and canſt thou thunder with a voice like Him?* as God himſelf argues with *Job.* Job 40. 9.

For in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord. God takes pleaſure to exerciſe theſe Perfections himſelf, and to ſee them imitated by us; and the imitation of theſe Divine Perfections is our perfection and glory; in compariſon of which all humane *wiſdom*, and *power*, and *riches*, are ſo far from being matter of glory, that they are very deſpicable and pitiful things: Knowledge and Skill to deviſe miſchief, and power to effect it, are the true Nature and Character of the Devil and his Angels; thoſe appoſtate and accurſed Spirits, who in temper and diſpoſition are moſt contrary to God, who is the Rule and Pattern of all perfection.

I ſhall only make two *Obſervations* or *Inferences* from what hath been ſaid, and then apply the whole Diſcourſe to the great Occaſion of this Day: And they are theſe.

Firſt, That the wiſeſt and ſureſt Reaſonings in Religion are grounded upon the unqueſtionable Perfections of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, That the Nature of God is the true *Idea* and Pattern of Perfection and Happineſs.

Firſt, *That the wiſeſt and ſureſt Reaſonings in Religion are grounded upon the unqueſtionable Perfections of the Divine Nature:* Upon thoſe more eſpecially which to us are moſt eaſie and intelligible: ſuch as are thoſe mentioned in the *Text*. And this makes the Knowledge of God, and of theſe Perfections, to be ſo uſeful and ſo valuable: Becauſe all Religion is founded in right Notions of God, and of his Perfections: Inſomuch that Divine Revelation it ſelf does ſuppoſe theſe for its foundation, and can ſignifie nothing to us unleſs theſe be firſt known and believed: For unleſs we be firſt firmly perſwaded of the Providence of God, and of his particular care of Mankind, why ſhould we ſuppoſe that he makes any Revelation of his Will to us? Unleſs it be firſt naturally known that God is a God of Truth, what ground is there for the belief of his Word? So that the Principles of *Natural* Religion are the foundation of that which is reveal'd: And therefore nothing can in Reaſon be admitted to be a Revelation from God, which does plainly contradict his eſſential Perfections.

Upon this *Principle*, a great many *Doctrines* are without more ado to be rejected, becauſe they do plainly and at firſt ſight contradict the Divine Nature and Perfections. I will give a few *Inſtances*, inſtead of many that might be given.

In vertue of this *Principle* I cannot believe, upon the pretended Authority or Infallibility of any Perſon or Church, that Force is a fit Argument to produce Faith: No man ſhall ever perſwade me, no not the Biſhop of *Meaux* with all his Eloquence, that Priſons and Tortures, Dragoons and the Galleys, are proper means to convince the Underſtanding, and either *Chriſtian* or *Humane* Methods of converting men to the true Religion.

For the ſame Reaſon I cannot believe, that God would not have men to underſtand their publick Prayers, nor the Leſſons of Scripture which are read to them: Becauſe a Leſſon is ſomething that is to be learnt, and therefore a Leſſon that is not to be underſtood is nonſenſe; for if it be not underſtood how can it be learnt?

As little can I believe, that God who cauſed the *Holy Scriptures* to be written for the Inſtruction of Mankind, did ever intend that *they* ſhould be lock'd up and conceal'd from the People in an unknown Tongue.

Leaſt of all can I believe that *Doctrine* of the Council of *Trent*, That the ſaving Efficacy of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the intention of the Prieſt that adminiſters them: Which is to ſay, that though the People believe and live never ſo well, yet they may be damn'd by ſhoals, and whole Pariſhes together, at the pleaſure of the Prieſt: And this for no other reaſon, but becauſe the Prieſt is ſo croſs and ſo cruel that he will not intend to ſave them.

Now can any man believe this, that hath any tolerable Notion either of the Goodneſs or Juſtice of God? May we not appeal to God in this, as *Abraham* did in another Caſe? *Wilt thou deſtroy the righteous with the wicked? That be far from thee, to do after this manner: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* Much more, to deſtroy the righteous for the wicked, and that righteous and innocent People ſhould lye at the mercy and will of a wicked and perverſe Prieſt, to be ſav'd or damn'd by him as he thinks fit, *That be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* For, to drive the argument to the head, if this be to do right there is no poſſibility of doing wrong.

Thus in things which are more obſcure we ſhould govern all our Reaſonings concerning God and Religion by that which is clear and unqueſtionable, and ſhould with *Moſes* lay down this for a certain Principle, *All his ways are judgment, a God of truth, and without iniquity, juſt and right is He:* And ſay with St. *Paul, Is there then unrighteouſneſs with God? God forbid?* And again, *We know that the Judgment of God is according to truth.*

2ly, The other *Inference* is this, *That the Nature of God is the true* Idea *and Pattern of Perfection and Happineſs:* And therefore nothing but our own conformity to it can make us happy: And for this reaſon, to underſtand and know God is our great excellency and glory, becauſe it is neceſſary to our imitation of *Him* who is the beſt and happieſt Being. And ſo far as we are from reſembling God, ſo far are we diſtant from Happineſs and the true temper of the Bleſſed. For Goodneſs is an eſſential ingredient of Happineſs; and as without Goodneſs there can be no true Majeſty and Greatneſs, ſo neither any true Felicity and Bleſſedneſs.

Now Goodneſs is a generous diſpoſition of mind to diffuſe and communicate it ſelf by making others to partake of our Happineſs, in ſuch degrees as they are capable: For no Being is ſo happy as it might be, that hath not the power and the pleaſure to make others happy: This ſurely is the higheſt pleaſure, I had almoſt ſaid pride, of a great Mind.

In vain therefore do we dream of Happineſs in any thing without us. Happineſs muſt be within us; the foundation of it muſt be laid in the inward frame and diſpoſition of our ſpirits: And the very ſame cauſes and ingredients which make up the Happineſs of God muſt be found in us, though in a much inferiour degree, or we cannot be happy. They underſtand not the nature of Happineſs, who hope for it upon any other terms: He who is the Author and Fountain of Happineſs cannot convey it to us by any other way, than by planting in us ſuch diſpoſitions of mind as are in truth a kind of participation of the Divine Nature, and by enduing us with ſuch qualities as are the neceſſary Materials of Happineſs: And a man may aſſoon be well without Health as happy without Goodneſs.

If a wicked man were taken up into Heaven, yet if he ſtill continue the ſame bad man that he was before, *cœlum, non animum mutavit,* he may have chang'd the *Climate,* and being gone into a far Country; but becauſe he carries *himſelf* ſtill along with him, he will ſtill be miſerable from himſelf: Becauſe the man's mind is not chang'd all the while, which would ſignifie a thouſand times more to his happineſs, than change of place, or of any outward circumſtances whatſoever: For a bad man hath a *Fiend* in his own Breaſt, and the fewel of Hell in his guilty Conſcience.

There is a certain kind of temper and diſpoſition which is neceſſary and eſſential to Happineſs, and *that* is Holineſs and Goodneſs, which is the very Nature of God; and ſo far as any man departs from this temper, ſo far he removes himſelf and runs away from Happineſs. And here the foundation of Hell is laid, in the evil diſpoſition of a man's own mind, which is naturally a torment to it ſelf: And till this be cur'd, it is as impoſſible for him to be happy, as for a Limb that is out of joint to be at eaſe; becauſe the man's Spirit is out of order, and off the hinges, and as it were toſs'd from its Center; and till that be ſet right, and reſtored to its proper and natural ſtate, the man will be perpetually unquiet, and can have no reſt and peace within himſelf. *The wicked,* ſaith the *Prophet, is like the troubled Sea, when it cannot reſt: There is no peace, ſaith my God, to the wicked:* No peace with God, no peace with his own mind; for a bad man is at perpetual diſcord and wars within himſelf: And *hence,* as St. *James* tells us, *come wars and fightings without us, even from our luſts which war in our members.*

And now that I have mention'd *wars and fightings without us,* this cannot but bring to mind the great and glorious Occaſion of this Day: Which gives us manifold cauſe of Praiſe and Thankſgiving to Almighty God: For ſeveral wonderful Mercies and Deliverances; and more particularly, for a moſt glorious Victory at Sea, vouchſafed to their *Majeſties* Fleet in this laſt Summer's Expedition.

For ſeveral great Mercies and Deliverances: For a wonderful Deliverance indeed, from a ſudden *Invaſion* deſign'd upon us by the inveterate and implacable Enemies of our Peace and Religion; which by the merciful Providence of God was happily and ſtrangely prevented, when it was juſt upon the point of execution.

Next, for the preſervation of our *Gracious Soveraign*, from that horrid and moſt barbarous Attempt deſign'd upon his Sacred Perſon: And from thoſe great and manifold Dangers to which he was expoſed in his late tedious Expedition: And for His ſafe and moſt welcome Return to us.

And laſtly, For a moſt glorious *Victory at Sea:* The greateſt and the cheapeſt that ever the Sun ſaw, from his firſt ſetting out to run his Courſe. The Opportunity indeed of this Victory was through the raſhneſs and confidence of our Enemies, by the wiſe Providence of God, put into our hands: But the improvement of this Opportunity into ſo great and happy a Victory, we owe under God, to the matchleſs Conduct and Courage of the brave *Admiral*, and to the invincible Reſolution and Valour of the *Captains* and *Seamen*.

This great Deliverance from the deſign'd *Invaſion*, and this glorious *Victory*, God vouchſafed to us *at Home*, whilſt His Sacred Majeſty was ſo freely hazarding his Royal Perſon *abroad*, in the Publick Cauſe of the Rights and Liberties of almoſt all *Europe*.

And now what may God juſtly expect from us, as a meet return for his Goodneſs to us? What? but that we ſhould *glorifie* Him, firſt by *offering praiſe* and thankſgiving; and then, by *ordering our converſation aright*, that he may ſtill delight to *ſhew* us *his Salvation*.

God might have ſtood aloof from us in the Day of our Diſtreſs, and have ſaid to us, as he once did to the People of *Iſrael*, ſo often have I deliver'd you from the hands of your Enemies, but ye have ſtill provok'd me more and more, *Wherefore I will deliver you no more:* He might have ſaid of us, as he did of the ſame People, *I will hide my face from them, I will ſee what their end ſhall be: For they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith:* Our reſolutions and promiſes of better obedience are not to be truſted; all our Repentance and *Righteouſneſs* are but *as the morning cloud, and like the early dew which paſſeth away:* Nay methinks God ſeems now to ſay to us, as he did of old to *Jeruſalem, Be inſtructed*, O Jeruſalem, *leſt my ſoul depart from thee, and I make thee deſolate, a Land not inhabited.*

Judg. 10. 13. Deut. 32. 20. Jer. 6. 8.

We are here met together this Day, to pay our Solemn acknowledgments to *the God of our Salvation; who hath ſhewed ſtrength with his arm, and hath ſcattered the proud in the imagination of their heart:* Even to *him that exerciſeth loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth:* In *Him* will we glory as our ſure Refuge and Defence, as our Mighty Deliverer, and the Rock of our Salvation.

And now I have only to entreat your patience a little longer, whilſt I apply what hath been diſcourſed upon this *Text* a little more cloſely to the Occaſion of this Day. I may be tedious, but I will not be long.

And bleſſed be God for this happy *Occaſion:* The greateſt *England* ever had, and, in the true conſequences of it, perhaps the greateſt that *Europe* ever had of Praiſe and Thankſgiving.

You have heard two ſorts of Perſons deſcribed in the *Text*, by very different Characters: The *One*, that glory in their *Wiſdom* and *Might*, and Riches: The *other*, that *glory in this, that* they *underſtand and know God to be the Lord, which exerciſeth loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth.*

And we have ſeen theſe two *Characters* exemplified, or rather drawn to the Life, in this preſent Age. We who live in this Weſtern part of *Chriſtendom* have ſeen a *mighty Prince*, by the juſt permiſſion of God, raiſed up to be a Terrour and Scourge to all his Neighbours: A *Prince*, who had in perfection all the Advantages mentioned in the former part of the *Text*: And who, in the opinion of many who had been long dazzled with his Splendour and Greatneſs, hath paſs'd for many years, for the moſt *Politick*, and *Powerful*, and *Richeſt Monarch* that hath appear'd in theſe parts of the World, for many Ages.

Who hath govern'd his Affairs by the deepeſt and ſteddieſt Counſels, and the moſt refin'd Wiſdom of this World: A Prince mighty and powerful in his preparations for War; formidable for his vaſt and well diſciplin'd Armies, and for his great Naval Force: And who had brought the Art of War almoſt to that perfection, as to be able to Conquer and do his buſineſs without fighting: A Myſtery hardly known to former Ages and Generations: And all this Skill and Strength united under one abſolute Will, not hamper'd or bound up by any reſtraints of Law or Conſcience.

A Prince that commands the Eſtates of all his Subjects, and of all his Conqueſts; which hath furniſhed him with an almoſt inexhauſtible Treaſure and Revenue: And One, who if the World doth not greatly miſtake him, hath ſufficiently *gloried* in all theſe Advantages, and even beyond the rate of a mortal man.

But not *knowing God to be the Lord, which exerciſes loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth*; How hath the pride of all his Glory been ſtain'd by Tyranny and Oppreſſion, by Injuſtice and Cruelty; by enlarging his Dominions without Right, and by making War upon his Neighbours without Reaſon, or even colour of Provocation? And this in a more barbarous manner than the moſt barbarous Nations ever did; carrying Fire and Deſolation whereſoever he went, and laying waſte many and great Cities without neceſſity, and without pity.

And now behold what a terrible Rebuke the Providence of God hath given to this mighty Monarch, in the full Carier of his Fortune and Fury. The conſideration whereof brings to my thoughts thoſe paſſages in the *Prophet* concerning old *Babylon*, that ſtanding and perpetual Type of the great Oppreſſors and Perſecutors of God's true Church and Religion: *How is the Oppreſſor ceaſed?* Iſa.14. *the exactor of gold ceaſed? He who ſmote the People in wrath with a continual ſtroke, he who ruled the Nations in anger is himſelf perſecuted, and none hindreth. The whole Earth is at reſt and is quiet, and breaks forth into ſinging: The grave beneath is moved for thee, to meet thee at thy coming; it ſtirreth up the dead for thee, even all the Captains of the Earth; it hath raiſed up from their Thrones all the Kings of the Nations; all they ſhall ſpeak and ſay unto thee, art thou alſo become weak as we are? art thou alſo become like unto us? how art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the morning? How art thou cut down to the ground that didſt weaken the Nations? For thou haſt ſaid in thy heart, I will aſcend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God: I will ſit alſo upon the Mount of the Congregation in the ſides of the North*, that is, upon Mount *Zion*, for juſt ſo the *Pſalmiſt* deſcribes it, *Beautiful for ſituation, the joy of the* Pſal.48.2. *whole Earth is Mount* Zion, *on the ſides of the North.* Here the King of *Babylon* threatens to take *Jeruſalem*, and to demoliſh the *Temple* where the Congregation of *Iſrael* met for the Worſhip of the true God; *I will alſo ſit upon the Mount of the Congregation in the ſides of the North.* Much in the ſame ſtyle with the threatnings of Modern *Babylon, I will deſtroy the Reformation, I will extirpate the Northern Hereſie.*

And then he goes on, *I will aſcend above the height of the Clouds, I will be like the moſt High: Yet thou ſhalt be brought down to the grave, to the ſides of the pit: They that ſee thee ſhall narrowly look upon thee, and conſider thee, ſaying, Is this the man that made the Earth to tremble, that did ſhake Kingdoms; that made the World as a Wilderneſs, and deſtroyed the Cities thereof, and opened not the Houſe of his Priſoners?*

God ſeems already to have begun this Work, in the late glorious Victory at Sea; and I hope he will *cut it ſhort in righteouſneſs.* I have ſometimes heretofore wondred, Why at the deſtruction of Modern and Myſtical *Babylon* the Scripture ſhould make ſo expreſs mention of great wailing and lamentation for the loſs of Her *Ships* and *Seamen:* Little imagining thirty years ago, that any of the *Kingdoms* who had *given their power to the Beaſt* would ever have arrived to that mighty *Naval* Force: But the *Scripture ſaith nothing in vain.* Rev. 18. 17.

Whether, and how far, Succeſs is an Argument of a good Cauſe, I ſhall not now debate: But thus much, I think, may ſafely be affirmed, That the Providence of God doth ſometimes, without plain and down-right Miracles, ſo viſibly ſhew it ſelf, that we cannot without great ſtupidity and obſtinacy refuſe to acknowledge it.

I grant, the Cauſe muſt firſt be manifeſtly juſt, before Succeſs can be made an Argument of God's favour to it and approbation of it: And if the Cauſe of true Religion, and the neceſſary defence of it againſt a falſe and idolatrous Worſhip, be a good Cauſe, *Ours* is ſo: And I do not here beg the Queſtion; we have abundantly proved it to the confuſion of our Adverſaries: If the vindication of the common Liberties of Mankind, againſt Tyranny and Oppreſſion, be a good Cauſe, then *Ours* is ſo: And this needs not to be proved, it is ſo glaringly evident to all the World. And as our Cauſe is not like *theirs*, ſo neither hath *their Rock* been *like our Rock, our Enemies themſelves being Judges.*

And yet as bad an Argument as ſucceſs is of a good Cauſe, I am ſorry to ſay it, but I am afraid it is true, it is like in the concluſion to prove the beſt Argument of all other to convince thoſe who have ſo long pretended Conſcience againſt ſubmiſſion to the preſent Government.

Meer ſucceſs is certainly one of the worſt Arguments in the World of a good Cauſe, and the moſt improper to ſatisfie Conſcience: And yet we find by experience, that in the iſſue it is the moſt ſucceſsful of all other Arguments; and does in a very odd, but effectual way, ſatisfie the Conſciences of a great many men by ſhewing them their Intereſt.

God has of late viſibly made bare his Arm in our behalf, though ſome are ſtill ſo blind and obſtinate that they will not ſee it: Like thoſe of whom the *Prophet* complains, *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up they will not ſee, but they ſhall ſee, and be aſhamed for their envy at thy People.* Iſa. 26. 7.

Thus have I repreſented unto you a mighty *Monarch*, who like a fiery *Comet* hath hung over *Europe* for many years; and by his malignant influence hath made ſuch terrible havock and devaſtations in this part of the World.

Let us now turn our View to the other part of the *Text:* And behold a greater than he is here: A Prince of a quite different Character, who does *underſtand and know God to be the Lord, which doth exerciſe loving-kindneſs, and judgment, and righteouſneſs in the Earth:* And who hath made it the great ſtudy and endeavour of his life to imitate theſe Divine Perfections, as far as the imperfection of humane Nature in this mortal ſtate will admit: I ſay, a greater than he is here: who never ſaid or did an inſolent thing, but inſtead of deſpiſing his Enemies, has upon all occaſions encounter'd them with an undaunted Spirit and Reſolution.

This is the Man whom God hath honoured to give a Check to this mighty Man of the Earth, and to put a hook into the Noſtrils of this great *Leviathan* who has ſo long had his paſtime in the Seas.

But we will not inſult, as he once did in a moſt unprincely manner over a Man much better than himſelf, when he believed Him to have been ſlain at the *Boyne:* And indeed Death came then as near to him as was poſſible without killing him: But the merciful Providence of God was pleaſed to ſtep in for his Preſervation, almoſt by a Miracle: For I do not believe that from the firſt uſe of great Guns to *that* Day, any mortal man ever had his ſhoulder ſo kindly kiſs'd by a Cannon-bullet.

But I will not treſpaſs any further upon that which is the great Ornament of all his other Vertues; though I have ſaid nothing of Him but what all the World does ſee and muſt acknowledge: He is as much above being flatter'd, as it is beneath an honeſt and a generous mind to flatter.

Let us then glory in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our Salvation: Let us now in the preſence of all his People pay our moſt thankful acknowledgements to him *who is worthy to be praiſed*; even to *the Lord God of Iſrael who alone doth wondrous things*; Who *giveth Victory unto Kings*, and hath *preſerved* our *David his Servant from the hurtful Sword.*

And let us humbly beſeech Almighty God, that he would long preſerve to us the invaluable Bleſſing of our two excellent Princes; whom the Providence of God hath ſent amongſt us, like two good Angels; not to reſcue two or three Perſons, but almoſt a whole Nation out of *Sodom:* By ſaving us I hope at laſt from our Vices, as well as at firſt from that Vengeance which was juſt ready to have been poured down upon us.

Two Sovereign Princes reigning together, and in the ſame Throne; and yet ſo intirely one, as perhaps no Nation, no Age can furniſh us with a Parallel: Two Princes perfectly united in the ſame Deſign, of promoting the true Religion, and the Publick Welfare, by reforming our Manners, and as far as is poſſible, by repairing the breaches, and healing the Diviſions of a miſerably diſtracted Church and Nation: In a word, Two Princes who are contented to ſacrifice Themſelves and their whole Time to the care of the Publick: And for the ſake of that to deny themſelves almoſt all ſorts of eaſe and pleaſure: *To deny themſelves*, did I ſay? No, they have wiſely and judiciouſly choſen the trueſt and higheſt Pleaſure that this World knows, the Pleaſure of doing good, and being Benefactors to Mankind. May they have a long and happy Reign over us, to make us happy, and to lay up in ſtore for Themſelves a Happineſs without meaſure, and without end, in God's glorious and everlaſting Kingdom: For his Mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*, to whom with thee, *O Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

SERMON XLII.

Againſt Evil-ſpeaking.

Preached before the

King and Queen

AT

WHITEHALL,

February the 25th 169$\frac{3}{4}$.

TIT. III. 2.

To ſpeak evil of no man.

General Perſwaſives to Repentance and a good Life, and Invectives againſt Sin and Wickedneſs at large, are certainly of good uſe to recommend Religion and Vertue, and to expoſe the deformity and danger of a vicious Courſe. But it muſt be acknowledg'd on the other hand, that theſe general Diſcourſes do not ſo immediately tend to reform the Lives of men; Becauſe they fall among the Croud, but do not touch the Conſciences of particular Perſons in ſo ſenſible and awakening a manner as when we treat of particular Duties and Sins, and endeavour to put men upon the practice of the one, and to reclaim them from the other, by proper Arguments taken from the Word of God, and from the nature of particular Vertues and Vices.

The *general* way is, as if a Phyſician, inſtead of applying particular Remedies to the Diſtemper of his Patient, ſhould entertain him with a long diſcourſe of Diſeaſes in general, and of the pleaſure and advantages of Health; and earneſtly perſwade him to be well; without taking his particular Diſeaſe into conſideration, and preſcribing Remedies for it.

But if we would effectually reform men, we muſt take to task the great and common diſorders of their Lives, and repreſent their faults to them in ſuch a manner as may convince them of the evil and danger of them, and put them upon the endeavour of a cure.

And to this end I have pitched upon one of the common and reigning Vices of the Age, *Calumny* and *Evil-ſpeaking*; by which men contract ſo much guilt to themſelves, and create ſo much trouble to others: And from which, it is to be feared, few or none are wholly free. For *who is he*, ſaith the Son of *Sirach, that hath not offended with his tongue? In many things*, ſaith St. *James, we offend all: And if any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.* But how few have attain'd to this perfection? And yet unleſs we do endeavour after it, and in ſome good meaſure attain it, all our pretence to Religion is vain: So the ſame *Apoſtle* tells us, *If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.*

Eccluſ.19.16.

James 3.2.

Jam.1.26.

For the more diſtinct handling of this Argument, I ſhall reduce my Diſcouſe to theſe *Five* Heads.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the Nature of this Vice, and wherein it conſiſts.
Secondly, I ſhall conſider the due extent of this Prohibition, *To ſpeak evil of no man.*
Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew the Evil of this practice, both in the *Cauſes* and *Effects* of it.
Fourthly, I ſhall add ſome further Conſiderations to diſſwade men from it.
Fifthly, I ſhall give ſome Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of it.

I. I ſhall conſider *what this Sin or Vice of Evil-ſpeaking, here forbidden by the Apoſtle, is*: μηδένα βλασφημεῖν, not to defame and ſlander any man, not to *hurt his reputation*, as the *Etymology* of the word doth import. So that this Vice conſiſts in ſaying things of others which tend to their diſparagement and reproach, to the taking away or leſſening of their Reputation and good Name. And this, whether the things ſaid be true or not. If they be falſe, and we know it, then it is down-right *Calumny*; and if we do not it, but take it upon the report of others, it is however a *Slander*; and ſo much the more injurious, becauſe really groundleſs and undeſerved. I.

If the thing be true, and we know it to be ſo, yet it is a defamation, and tends to the prejudice of our neighbour's reputation: And it is a fault to ſay the evil of others which is true, unleſs there be ſome good reaſon for it beſides: Becauſe it is contrary to that charity and goodneſs which *Chriſtianity* requires, to divulge the faults of others, though they be really guilty of them, without neceſſity or ſome other very good reaſon for it.

Again, It is *Evil-ſpeaking* and the Vice condemn'd in the *Text*, whether we be the firſt Authors of an ill Report, or relate it from others; becauſe the man that is evil ſpoken of is equally defam'd either way.

Again, Whether we ſpeak evil of a man to his face, or behind his back: The former way indeed ſeems to be the more generous, but yet is a great Fault, and that which we call *reviling*: The latter is more mean and baſe, and that which we properly call *Slander* or *Backbiting*.

And Laſtly, Whether it be done directly and in expreſs terms, or more obſcurely and by way of oblique inſinuation; whether by way of down-right reproach, or with ſome crafty preface of commendation: For ſo it have the effect to defame, the manner of addreſs does not much alter the caſe: The one may be more dextrous, but is not one jot leſs faulty: For many times the deepeſt Wounds are given by theſe ſmoother and more artificial ways of Slander; as by asking queſtions, *Have you not heard ſo and ſo of ſuch a man? I ſay no more, I only ask the queſtion:* Or by general intimations, that *they are loth to ſay what they have heard of ſuch a one, are very ſorry for it, and do not at all believe it*, if you will believe *them*: And this many times without telling the thing, but leaving you in the dark to ſuſpect the worſt.

Theſe and ſuch like Arts, though they may ſeem to be tenderer and gentler ways of uſing men's reputation, yet in truth they are the moſt malicious and effectual methods of Slander; becauſe they inſinuate ſomething that is much worſe than is ſaid, and yet are very apt to create in unwary men a ſtrong belief of ſomething that is very bad, though they know not what it is. So that it matters not in what faſhion a Slander is dreſs'd up, if it tend to defame a man and to diminiſh his Reputation, it is the Sin forbidden in the *Text*.

II. II. We will conſider *the extent of this Prohibition to ſpeak evil of no man*; and the due *bounds and limitations of it*. For it is not to be underſtood abſolutely, to forbid us to ſay any thing concerning others that is bad. This in ſome caſes may be neceſſary and our duty, and in ſeveral caſes very fit and reaſonable. The Queſtion is, In what Caſes by the general Rules of Scripture and right Reaſon we are warranted to ſay the evil of others that is true?

In general, we are not to do this without great reaſon and neceſſity; as, for the prevention of ſome great evil, or the procuring of ſome conſiderable good to our ſelves, or others. And this I take to be the meaning of that advice of the Son of *Sirach*, *Whether it be to a friend or a foe, talk not of other mens lives; and if thou canſt without offence reveal them not*; that is, if without hurt to any body thou canſt conceal them, divulge them not. Eccl. 19.8.

But becauſe this may not be direction ſufficient, I ſhall inſtance in ſome of the principal Caſes wherein men are warranted to ſpeak evil of others, and yet in ſo doing do not offend againſt this Prohibition in the *Text*.

Firſt, It is not only lawful, but very commendable, and many times our duty to do this in order to the probable amendment of the perſon of whom evil is ſpoken. In ſuch a caſe we may tell a man of his faults privately; or where it may not be ſo fit for us to uſe that boldneſs and freedom, we may reveal his faults to one who is more fit and improper to reprove him, and will probably make no other uſe of this diſcovery but in order to his amendment. And this is ſo far from being a breach of Charity, that it is one of the beſt Teſtimonies of it. For perhaps the party may not be guilty of what hath been reported of him, and then it is a kindneſs to give him the opportunity of vindicating himſelf: Or if he be guilty, perhaps being privately and prudently told of it he may reform. In this Caſe the Son of *Sirach* adviſeth to reveal mens faults; *Admoniſh a friend*, ſays he, *it may be he hath not done it; and if he have done it, that he do it no more: Admoniſh a friend, it may be he hath not ſaid it; and if he have, that he ſpeak it not again: Admoniſh a friend, for many times it is a ſlander; and believe not every tale.* Ecclus. 19. 13, 14, 15.

But then we muſt take care that this be done out of kindneſs, and that nothing of our own paſſion be mingled with it; and that under pretence of reproving and reforming men, we do not reproach and revile them, and tell them of their faults in ſuch a manner as if we did it to ſhew our *authority* rather than our *charity*. It requires a great deal of addreſs and gentle application ſo to manage the buſineſs of Reproof, as not to irritate and exaſperate the perſon whom we reprove, inſtead of curing him.

Secondly, This likewiſe is not only lawful, but our duty, when we are legally called to bear witneſs concerning the fault and crime of another. A good man would not be an accuſer, unleſs the publick good, or the prevention of ſome great evil ſhould require it. And then the plain reaſon of the thing will ſufficiently juſtifie a voluntary accuſation: otherwiſe it hath always among well-manner'd People been eſteemed very odious for a man to be officious in this kind, and a forward Informer concerning the miſdemeanour of others. *Magiſtrates* may ſometimes think it fit to give encouragement to ſuch perſons, and to ſet one bad man to catch another, becauſe ſuch men are fitteſt for ſuch dirty work: But they can never inwardly approve them, nor will they ever make them their Friends and Confidents.

But when a man is call'd to give teſtimony in this kind in obedience to the Laws, and out of reverence to the Oath taken in ſuch Caſes, he is ſo far from deſerving blame for ſo doing, that it would be an unpardonable fault in him to conceal the truth, or any part of it.

Thirdly, It is lawful to publiſh the faults of others, in our own neceſſary defence and vindication. When a man cannot conceal anothers faults without betraying his own innocency, no charity requires a man to ſuffer himſelf to be defamed to ſave the reputation of another man. *Charity begins at home*; and though a man had never ſo much goodneſs, he would firſt ſecure his own good name, and then be concern'd for other mens. We are *to love our neighbour as our ſelves*; ſo that the love of our ſelves is the Rule and meaſure of our love to our Neighbour: And therefore *firſt*, otherwiſe it could not be the *Rule*. And it would be very well for the World, if our Charity would riſe thus high; and no man would hurt another man's reputation, but where his own is in real danger.

Fourthly, This alſo is lawful for caution and warning to a third perſon, that is in danger to be infected by the company, or ill example of another; or may be greatly prejudiced by repoſing too much confidence in him, having no knowledge or ſuſpicion of his bad qualities: But even in this caſe we ought to take great care that the ill character we give of any man be ſpread no further than is neceſſary to the good end we deſigned in it.

Beſides theſe more obvious and remarkable Caſes, this Prohibition doth not I think hinder but that in ordinary converſation men may mention that ill of others which is already made as publick as it well can be: Or that one friend may not in freedom ſpeak to another of the miſcarriage of a third perſon, where he is ſecure no ill uſe will be made of it, and that it will go no further to his prejudice: Provided always, that we take no delight in hearing or ſpeaking ill of others: And the leſs we do it, though without any malice or deſign of harm, ſtill the better; becauſe this ſhews that we do not feed upon ill reports and take pleaſure in them.

Theſe are all the uſual Caſes in which it may be neceſſary for us to ſpeak evil of other men. And theſe are ſo evidently reaſonable that the Prohibition in the *Text* cannot with reaſon be extended to them. And if no man would allow himſelf to ſay any thing to the prejudice of another man's good name, but in theſe and the like Caſes, the tongues of men would be very innocent, and the World would be very quiet. I proceed in the

III^d^ place, to conſider *the evil of this Practice*, both in the *Cauſes* and the *Conſequences* of it. III.

Firſt, We will conſider the *Cauſes* of it. And it commonly ſprings from one or more of theſe evil Roots.

Firſt, One of the deepeſt and moſt common *Cauſes* of *evil-ſpeaking* is *ill-nature* and cruelty of diſpoſition: And by a general miſtake *Ill-nature* paſſeth for *Wit*, as *Cunning* doth for *Wiſdom*; though in truth they are nothing a-kin to one another, but as far diſtant as *Vice* and *Vertue.*

And there is no greater evidence of the bad temper of Mankind, than the general proneneſs of Men to this Vice. For (as our *Saviour* ſays) *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth ſpeaketh.* And therefore men do commonly incline to the cenſorious and uncharitable ſide: which ſhews humane Nature to be ſtrangely diſtorted from its original rectitude and innocency. The Wit of Man doth more naturally vent it ſelf in *Satyr* and Cenſure, than in Praiſe and *Panegyrick.* When men ſet themſelves to commend, it comes hardly from them, and not without great force and ſtraining; and if any thing be fitly ſaid in that kind, it doth hardly reliſh with moſt men: But in the way of *Invective,* the Invention of men is a plentiful and never-failing Spring: And this kind of Wit is not more eaſie than it is acceptable: It is greedily entertained and greatly applauded, and every man is glad to hear others abuſed, not conſidering how ſoon it may come to his own turn to lye down and make ſport for others.

To ſpeak evil of others, is almoſt become the general entertainment of all Companies: And the great and ſerious buſineſs of moſt Meetings and Viſits, after the neceſſary Ceremonies and Complements are over, is to ſit down and back-bite all the World. 'Tis the *Sawce* of Converſation, and all Diſcourſe is counted but flat and dull which hath not ſomething of *piquancy* and ſharpneſs in it againſt ſome body. For men generally love rather to hear evil of others than good, and are ſecretly pleas'd with ill reports, and drink them in with greedineſs and delight: Though at the ſame time they have ſo much Juſtice, as to hate thoſe that propagate them; and ſo much Wit, as to conclude that theſe very perſons will do the ſame for them in another Place and Company.

But eſpecially, if it concerns one of another *Party,* and that differs from us in matters of Religion; in this Caſe, all Parties ſeem to be agreed that they do God great ſervice in blaſting the reputation of their Adverſaries: And though they all pretend to be *Chriſtians,* and the *Diſciples* of *Him* who taught nothing but *kindneſs* and *meekneſs* and *charity;* yet it is ſtrange to ſee with what a ſalvage and murderous diſpoſition they will flie at one anothers Reputation and tear it in pieces: And whatever other *Scruples* they may have, they make none to beſpatter one another in the moſt bitter and ſlanderous manner.

But if they hear any good of their Adverſaries, with what nicety and caution do they receive it? how many objections do they raiſe againſt it? and with what coldneſs do they at laſt admit it? *It is very well,* ſay they, *if it be true: I ſhall be glad to hear it confirm'd. I never heard ſo much good of him before. You are a good man your ſelf, but have a care you be not deceived.*

Nay it is well, if to balance the matter, and ſet things even, they do not clap ſome infirmity and fault into the other Scale, that ſo the Enemy may not go off with flying Colours.

But on the other ſide, every man is a good and ſubſtantial Author of an ill Report. I do not apply this to any one ſort of men, though all are to blame this way; *Iliacos intra muros peccatur, & extra.* To ſpeak impartially, the *Zealots* of all *Parties* have got a *ſcurvy trick* of lying for the Truth.

But of all ſorts of People, I have obſerved the *Prieſts* and *Bigots* of the Church of *Rome* to be the ableſt in this way, and to have the ſtrongeſt Faith for a luſty Falſhood and Calumny. Others will bandy a falſe Report, and toſs it from one hand to another; but I never knew any that would ſo hug a Lye and be ſo very fond of it. They ſeem to be deſcribed by St. *John* in that expreſſion in the Revelation, *Whoſoever loveth and maketh a lye.*

Another ſhrewd ſign that *ill-nature* lies at the root of this *Vice* is, that we eaſily forget the good that is ſaid of others, and ſeldom make mention of it; but the contrary ſticks with us, and lies uppermoſt in our memories, and is ready to come out upon all occaſions: And which is yet more ill-natur'd and unjuſt, many times when we do not believe it our ſelves, we tell it to others, with this charitable Caution, *That we hope it is not true:* But in the mean time we give it our *Paſs*, and venture it to take its fortune to be believed or not, according to the charity of thoſe into whoſe hands it comes.

Secondly, Another Cauſe of the commonneſs of this Vice is, that many are ſo bad themſelves, in one kind or other. For to think and ſpeak ill of others is not only a bad thing, but a ſign of a bad man. Our *Bleſſed Saviour*, ſpeaking of the evil of the *laſt days*, gives this as the reaſon of the great decay of Charity among men; *Becauſe Iniquity ſhall abound, the Love of many ſhall wax cold.* Mat.24.12. When men are bad themſelves, they are glad of any opportunity to cenſure others, and are always apt to ſuſpect that evil of other men which they know by themſelves. They cannot have a good opinion of themſelves, and therefore are very unwilling to have ſo of any body elſe; and for this reaſon they endeavour to bring men to a level, hoping it will be ſome juſtification of them if they can but render others as bad as themſelves.

Thirdly, Another ſource of this Vice is *Malice* and *Revenge*. When men are in Heat and Paſſion, they do not conſider what is true, but what is ſpiteful and miſchievous; and ſpeak evil of others in revenge of ſome injury which they have received from them: And when they are blinded by their Paſſions, they lay about them madly and at a venture, not much caring whether the evil they ſpeak be true or not. Nay many are ſo *Deviliſh*, as to invent and raiſe falſe Reports on purpoſe to blaſt mens Reputation. This is a *Diabolical* temper, and therefore St. *James* tells us that the ſlanderous *Tongue is ſet on fire of Hell:* And the *Devil* hath his very *Name* from *Calumny* and falſe Accuſation; and it is his *Nature* too, for he is always ready to ſtir up and foment this evil ſpirit among them: Nay, the *Scripture* tells us that he hath the malice and impudence to accuſe good men before God; as he did *Job*, charging him with *Hypocriſie* to God himſelf; *Who*, he knows, *does know the hearts of all the children of men.*

Fourthly, Another *Cauſe* of Evil-ſpeaking is *Envy*. Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others, and think that their Reputation obſcures *them*, and that their commendable qualities do ſtand in *their* light; and therefore they do what they can to caſt a cloud over them, that the bright ſhining of their Vertues may not ſcorch *them*. This makes them greedily to entertain, and induſtriouſly to publiſh any thing that may ſerve to that purpoſe, thereby to raiſe themſelves upon the Ruins of other mens Reputation: And therefore as ſoon as they have got an ill Report of any good man by the end, to work they preſently go to ſend it abroad by the firſt *Poſt:* For the ſtring is always ready upon their Bow to let fly this Arrow with an incredible ſwiftneſs, through *City* and *Country*; for fear the innocent man's juſtification ſhould over-take it.

Fifthly, Another *Cauſe* of Evil-ſpeaking is *Impertinence* and *Curioſity*; an itch of talking and medling in the affairs of other Men, which do no wiſe concern them. Some perſons love to mingle themſelves in all buſineſs, and are loth to ſeem ignorant of ſo important a peice of *News* as the *faults* and *follies* of men, or any bad thing that is talk'd of in good Company. And therefore they do with great care pick up ill Stories, as good matter of diſcourſe in the next Company that is worthy of them: And this perhaps not out of any great malice,but for want of ſomething better to talk of,and becauſe their Parts lie chiefly that way.

Laſtly, Men do this many times out of *wantonneſs* and for *diverſion*.So little do light and vain men conſider, that a man's Reputation is too great and tender a Concernment to be jeſted withal; and that a ſlanderous Tongue *bites like a Serpent*, and *wounds like a Sword*. For what can be more barbarous,next to ſporting with a man's Life, than to play with his Honour and Reputation, which to ſome men is dearer to them than their Lives?

It is a cruel pleaſure which ſome men take in worrying the Reputation of others much better than themſelves; and this only to divert themſelves and the Company. *Solomon* compares this ſort of men to diſtracted perſons; *As a madman*, ſaith he, *who caſteth fire-brands, arrows,and death, ſo is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*; the LXX. render it, *So is the man that defameth his neighbour, and ſaith, Am I not in ſport?* Such, and ſo bad are the Cauſes of this Vice. I proceed to conſider, in the

Second place, the ordinary, but very pernicious *Conſequences* and *Effects* of it; both to *Others*, and to *our Selves*.

Firſt, To *Others*; the Parties I mean that are ſlandered. To them it is certainly a great *injury*, and commonly a high *Provocation*,but always matter of no ſmall *grief* and *trouble* to them.

It is certainly a great *injury*, and if the evil which we ſay of them be not true, it is an injury beyond imagination, and beyond all poſſible reparation. And though we ſhould do our utmoſt endeavour afterwards towards their Vindication, yet that makes but very little amends; becauſe the Vindication ſeldom reacheth ſo far as the Reproach,and becauſe commonly men are neither ſo forward to ſpread the Vindication, nor is it ſo eaſily received after *ill* impreſſions are once made. The ſolicitous Vindication of a man's ſelf is, at the beſt, but an *after-game*; and for the moſt part a man had better ſit ſtill,than to run the hazard of making the matter worſe by *playing* it.

I will add one thing more,That it is an Injury that deſcends to a man's Children and Poſterity; becauſe the good or ill Name of the Father is deriv'd down to them; and many times the beſt thing he hath to leave them is the Reputation of his unblemiſh'd Virtue and Worth: And do we make no Conſcience to rob his innocent Children of the beſt part of this ſmall Patrimony, and of all the kindneſs that would have been done them for their Father's ſake, if his Reputation had not been ſo undeſervedly ſtain'd? Is it no Crime by the breath of our mouth at once to blaſt a man's Reputation, and to ruin his Children, perhaps to all Poſterity? Can we make a jeſt of ſo ſerious a matter? Of an Injury ſo very hard to be repented of as it ought, becauſe in ſuch a Caſe no Repentance will be acceptable without Reſtitution, if it be in our power. And perhaps it will undo us in this World to make it; and if we do it not, will be our Ruin in the other.

I will put the Caſe at the beſt, that the matter of the Slander is true; yet no man's Reputation is conſiderably ſtained, though never ſo deſervedly,without great harm and damage to him. And it is great odds but the matter by paſſing through ſeveral hands is aggravated beyond truth,every one out of his bounty being apt to add ſomething to it.

But, beſides the *Injury*, it is commonly a very high *Provocation*. And the conſequence of that may be as bad as we can imagine, and may end in dangerous and deſperate Quarrels. This reaſon the wiſe Son of *Sirach* gives why we ſhould defame no man: *Whether it be*, ſays he, *to a friend or a foe,talk not of other mens lives. For he hath heard and obſerved thee*; that is, one way or other

Ecclus. 19. 8,9.

other it will probably come to his knowledge, *and when the time cometh he will ſhew his hatred*; that is, he will take the firſt opportunity to revenge it.

At the beſt, it is always matter of *Grief* to the perſon that is defam'd: And *Chriſtianity*, which is the *beſt natur'd Inſtitution in the World*, forbids us the doing of thoſe things whereby we may *grieve one another*. A man's good name is a tender thing, and a wound there ſinks deep into the ſpirit even of a wiſe and good man: And the more innocent any man is in this kind, the more ſenſible is he of this hard uſage; becauſe he never treats others ſo, nor is he conſcious to himſelf that he hath deſerved it.

Secondly, The *Conſequences* of this Vice are as bad or worſe to *our ſelves.* Whoever is wont to ſpeak evil of others, gives a bad character of himſelf, even to thoſe whom he deſires to pleaſe; who, if they be wiſe enough, will conclude that he ſpeaks of them to others, as he does of others to them: And were it not for that fond partiality which men have for themſelves, no man could be ſo blind as not to ſee this.

And it is very well worthy of our conſideration, which our *Saviour* ſays in this very Caſe, That *with what meaſure we mete to others, it ſhall be meaſured to us again*; and that many times *heaped up*, and *running over*. For there is hardly any thing wherein Mankind do uſe more ſtrict juſtice and equality, than *in rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing.* Matth. 7.

Nay, Revenge often goes further than words. A reproachful and ſlanderous Speech hath coſt many a man a *Duel*, and in that the loſs of his own Life, or the Murther of another, perhaps with the loſs of his own ſoul: And I have often wonder'd that among *Chriſtians* this matter is no more laid to heart.

And though neither of theſe great Miſchiefs ſhould happen to us, yet this may be inconvenient enough many other ways. For no man knows in the chance of things, and the mutability of humane affairs, whoſe kindneſs and good will he may come to ſtand in need of before he dies. So that did a man only conſult his own ſafety and quiet, he ought to refrain from *evil ſpeaking. What man is he*, ſaith the *Pſalmiſt*, *that deſireth life, and loveth many days, that he may ſee good: Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.* Pſal. 34. 12, 13.

But there is an infinitely greater Danger hanging over us from God. If we allow our ſelves in this evil practice, all our Religion is good for nothing. So St. *James* expreſly tells us, *If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, that man's Religion is vain.* And St. *Paul* puts *Slanderers* and *Revilers* amongſt thoſe that *ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* And our *Bleſſed Saviour* hath told us, That *by our words we ſhall be juſtified, and by our words we ſhall be condemned.* To which I will add the counſel given us by the *Wiſe man, Refrain your tongue from back-biting, for there is no word ſo ſecret that ſhall go for nought, and the mouth that ſlandereth ſlayeth the Soul.* I proceed in the Jam. 1. 26. 1 Cor. 6. 10. Wiſd of Solomon, c. 1. v. 11.

IVth place, to add *ſome further Arguments and Conſiderations to take men off from this Vice:* As,

Firſt, That the uſe of *Speech* is a peculiar Prerogative of Man above other Creatures, and beſtowed upon him for ſome excellent end and purpoſe: That by this *Faculty* we might communicate our thoughts more eaſily to one another, and conſult together for our mutual comfort and benefit: Not to enable us to be hurtful and injurious, but helpful and beneficial to one another. The *Pſalmiſt*, as by *Interpreters* is generally thought, calls our *Tongue* our *Glory*; therewith we *praiſe God* and *bleſs Men*. Now to *bleſs* is to ſpeak well of any, and to wiſh them well. So that we pervert the uſe of *Speech* and turn our *glory* into ſhame, when we abuſe this *Faculty* to the injury and reproach of any.

Secondly, Conſider how cheap a kindneſs it is to ſpeak well, at leaſt not to ſpeak ill of any. A good word is an eaſie obligation, but not to ſpeak ill requires only our Silence, which coſts us nothing. Some inſtances of Charity are chargeable, as to relieve the wants and neceſſities of others: The expence deters many from this kind of Charity. But were a man never ſo covetous, he might afford another man his good word; at leaſt he might refrain from ſpeaking ill of him: eſpecially if it be conſider'd how dear many have paid for a ſlanderous and reproachful word.

Thirdly, Conſider that no quality doth ordinarily recommend one more to the favour and good will of men, than to be free from this Vice. Every one deſires ſuch a man's friendſhip, and is apt to repoſe a great truſt and confidence in him: And when he is dead, men will praiſe him; and next to Piety towards God, and Righteouſneſs to Men, nothing is thought a more ſignificant commendation, than that he was never, or very rarely heard to ſpeak ill of any. It was a ſingular Character of a *Roman Gentleman*, *Neſcivit quid eſſet maledicere*, *He knew not what it was to give any man an ill word.*

Fourthly, Let every man lay his hand upon his heart, and conſider how himſelf is apt to be affected with this uſage. Speak thy Conſcience *Man*, and ſay whether, as bad as thou art, thou wouldſt not be glad to have every man's, eſpecially every good man's good word? And to have thy faults conceal'd, and not to be hardly ſpoken of, though it may be not altogether without truth, by thoſe whom thou didſt never offend by word or deed? But with what face or reaſon doſt thou expect this from others, to whom thy carriage hath been ſo contrary? Nothing ſurely is more equal and reaſonable than that known *Rule*, *What thou wouldſt have no man do to thee, that do thou to no man.*

Fifthly, When you are going to ſpeak reproachfully of others, conſider whether you do not lye open to juſt reproach in the ſame, or ſome other kind. Therefore give no Occaſion, no Example of this barbarous uſage of one another.

There are very few ſo innocent and free either from infirmities or greater faults, as not to be obnoxious to reproach upon one account or other; even the wiſeſt, and moſt vertuous, and moſt perfect among men have ſome little vanity, or affectation, which lays them open to the raillery of a mimical and malicious Wit: Therefore we ſhould often turn our thoughts upon our ſelves, and look into that part of the *Wallet* which men commonly fling over their ſhoulders and keep behind them, that they may not ſee their own Faults: And when we have ſearched that well, let us remember our *Saviour's Rule*, *He that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.*

Laſtly conſider, That it is in many Caſes as great a Charity to conceal the evil you hear and know of others, as if you relieved them in a great neceſſity. And we think him a hard-hearted man that will not beſtow a ſmall Alms upon one in great want. It is an excellent Advice which the Son of *Sirach* gives to this purpoſe; *Talk not of other mens lives: If thou haſt heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold it will not burſt thee.* I ſhall in the

Ecclus. 19. 10.

V. V^th^ and *laſt* place, *give ſome Rules and Directions for the prevention and cure of this great evil among men.*

Firſt, *Never ſay any evil of any man, but what you certainly know.* Whenever you poſitively accuſe and *endite* any man of any *Crime*, though it be in private and among Friends, ſpeak as if you were upon your *Oath*, becauſe God ſees and hears you. This not only Charity, but Juſtice and regard to Truth do demand of us. He that eaſily credits an ill Report is almoſt as faulty as the firſt inventer of it. For though you do not make, yet you commonly propagate a *Lie*. Therefore never ſpeak evil of any upon *common Fame*, which for the moſt part is falſe, but almoſt always uncertain whether it be true or not.

Not but that it is a fault, in moſt Caſes, to report the evil of men which is true, and which we certainly know to be ſo: But if I cannot prevail to make men wholly to abſtain from this fault, I would be glad to compound with ſome Perſons, and to gain this point of them however; becauſe it would retrench *nine* parts in *ten* of the *evil-ſpeaking* that is in the World.

Secondly, Before you ſpeak evil of any man, conſider whether he hath not obliged you by ſome real kindneſs, and then it is a bad return to ſpeak ill of him who hath done us good. Conſider alſo, whether you may not come hereafter to be acquainted with him, related to him, or obliged by him whom you have thus injured? And how will you then be aſhamed when you reflect upon it, and perhaps have reaſon alſo to believe that he to whom you have done this injury is not ignorant of it?

Conſider likewiſe, whether in the change of humane Affairs, you may not ſome time or other come to ſtand in need of his favour; and how incapable this carriage of yours towards him will render you of it? And whether it may not be in his power to revenge a ſpiteful and needleſs word by a ſhrewd turn? So that if a man made no conſcience of hurting others, yet he ſhould in prudence have ſome conſideration of himſelf.

Thirdly, Let us accuſtom our ſelves to pity the Faults of men, and to be truly ſorry for them, and then we ſhall take no pleaſure in publiſhing them. And this common Humanity requires of us, conſidering the great infirmities of humane Nature, and that we our ſelves alſo are liable to be tempted: Conſidering likewiſe, how ſevere a Puniſhment every Fault and Miſcarriage is to it ſelf; and how terribly it expoſeth a man to the wrath of God, both in this World and the other. He is not a good *Chriſtian*, that is not heartily ſorry for the faults even of his greateſt Enemies; and if he be ſo, he will diſcover them no further than is neceſſary to ſome good end.

Fourthly, Whenever we hear any man evil ſpoken of, if we know any good of him let us ſay *that*. It is always the more humane and the more honourable part to ſtand up in the defence and vindication of others, than to accuſe and beſpatter them. Poſſibly the good you may have heard of them may not be true, but it is much more probable that the evil which you have heard of them is not true neither: However, it is better to preſerve the credit of a bad man, than to ſtain the reputation of the innocent. And if there were any need that a man ſhould be evil ſpoken of, it is but fair and equal that his good and bad Qualities ſhould be mention'd together; otherwiſe he may be ſtrangely miſrepreſented, and an indifferent Man may be made a Monſter.

They that will obſerve nothing in a Wiſe man, but his over-ſights and follies; nothing in a Good man, but his failings and infirmities; may make a ſhift to render a very wiſe and good man very deſpicable. If one ſhould heap together all the paſſionate Speeches, all the froward and imprudent Actions of the beſt Man; all that he had ſaid, or done amiſs in his whole Life, and preſent it all at one view, concealing his Wiſdom and Vertues; the Man in this Diſguiſe would look like a *Mad-man* or a *Fury*: And yet if his Life were fairly repreſented, and juſt in the ſame manner it was led; and his many and great Vertues ſet over againſt his Failings and Infirmities, he would appear to all the World to be an admirable and excellent Perſon. But how many and great ſoever any man's ill Qualities are, it is but juſt that with all this heavy load of Faults he ſhould have the due praiſe of the few real Vertues that are in him.

Fifthly, That you may not ſpeak ill of any, do not delight to hear ill of them. Give no countenance to *buſie-bodies*, and thoſe that love to talk of other men's Faults: Or if you cannot decently reprove them becauſe of their Quality, then divert the Diſcourſe ſome other way; or if you cannot do that, by ſeeming not to mind it,you may ſufficiently ſignifie that you do not like it.

Sixthly, Let every man mind himſelf, and his own Duty and Concernment. Do but endeavour in good earneſt to mend thy ſelf, and it will be work enough for one Man, and leave thee but little time to talk of others. When *Plato* withdrew from the Court of *Dionyſius*, who would fain have had a famous *Philoſopher* for his Flatterer, they parted in ſome unkindneſs, and *Dionyſius* bade him not to ſpeak ill of him when he was return'd in to *Greece*; *Plato* told him, *he had no leiſure for it*; meaning that he had better things to mind, than to take up his thoughts and talk with the Faults of ſo bad a man, ſo notoriouſly known to all the World.

Laſtly, Let us ſet a watch before the door of our lips, and not ſpeak but upon conſideration: I do not mean to ſpeak *finely*, but *fitly*. Eſpecially when thou ſpeakeſt of others, conſider of *whom*, and *what* thou art going to ſpeak: Uſe great Caution and Circumſpection in this matter: Look well about thee; on every ſide of the thing, and on every perſon in the Company, before thy words ſlip from thee; which when they are once out of thy lips, are for ever out of thy power.

Not that men ſhould be ſullen in company, and ſay nothing; or ſo ſtiff in Converſation, as to drop nothing but *Aphoriſms* and *Oracles*: Eſpecially among Equals and Friends, we ſhould not be ſo reſerved as if we would have it taken for a mighty favour that we vouchſafe to ſay any thing. If a Man had the underſtanding of an *Angel*, he muſt be contented to abate ſomething of this exceſs of *Wiſdom*, for fear of being thought *Cunning*. The true Art of Converſation, if any body can hit upon it, ſeems to be this; an appearing freedom and openneſs, with a reſolute reſervedneſs as little appearing as is poſſible.

All that I mean by this *Caution* is, that we ſhould conſider well what we ſay, eſpecially of others. And to this end we ſhould endeavour to get our Minds furniſhed with matter of Diſcourſe concerning things uſeful in themſelves, and not hurtful to others: And, if we have but a Mind wiſe enough, and good enough, we may eaſily find a Field large enough for innocent Converſation; ſuch as will harm no body, and yet be acceptable enough to the better and wiſer part of Mankind: And why ſhould any one be at the coſt of playing the fool to gratifie any body whatſoever?

I have done with the *Five* things I propounded to ſpeak to upon this Argument. But becauſe hardly any thing can be ſo clear, but ſomething may be ſaid againſt it; nor any thing ſo bad, but ſomething may be pleaded in excuſe for it: I ſhall therefore take notice of two or three *Pleas* that may be made for it.

Firſt, Some pretend mighty Injury and Provocation. If in the ſame kind, it ſeems thou art ſenſible of it; and therefore thou of all men oughteſt to abſtain from it: But in what kind ſoever it be, the Chriſtian Religion forbids

bids Revenge. Therefore do not plead one Sin in excuſe of another, and make *Revenge* an Apology for *Reviling*.

Secondly, It is alledged by others, with a little better grace, that if this Doctrine were practiſed, Converſation would be ſpoil'd, and there would not be matter enough for pleaſant Diſcourſe and Entertainment.

I anſwer, The deſign of this Diſcourſe is to redreſs a great evil in Converſation, and that I hope which mends it will not ſpoil it. And however, if men's Tongues lay a little more ſtill, and moſt of us ſpake a good deal leſs than we do, both of our ſelves and others, I ſee no great harm in it: I hope we might for all that live comfortably and in good health, and ſee many good days. *David*, I am ſure, preſcribes it as an excellent *Receipt*, in his Opinion, for a quiet, and cheerful, and long Life, to refrain from evil-ſpeaking; *What man is he that deſireth life, and loveth many days that he may ſee good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from ſpeaking falſhood.* Pſal. 34. 12,13.

But granting that there is ſome pleaſure in *Invective*, I hope there is a great deal more in *Innocence:* And the more any man conſiders this, the truer he will find it; and whenever we are ſerious, we our ſelves cannot but acknowledge it. When a man examines himſelf impartially before the *Sacrament*, or is put in mind upon a *Death-bed* to make reparation for Injuries done in this kind, he will then certainly be of this mind, and wiſh he had not done them. For this certainly is one neceſſary qualification for the *Bleſſed Sacrament*, that we *be in love and charity with our neighbours*; with which temper of mind this quality is utterly inconſiſtent.

Thirdly, There is yet a more ſpecious *Plea* than either of the former, that men will be encouraged to do ill if they can eſcape the tongues of men; as they would do, if this Doctrine did effectually take place: Becauſe by this means one great reſtraint from doing evil would be taken away, which theſe good men, who are ſo bent upon reforming the World, think would be great pity. For many who will venture upon the diſpleaſure of God, will yet abſtain from doing bad things for fear of reproach from Men: Beſides, that this ſeems the moſt proper puniſhment of many Faults which the Laws of Men can take no notice of.

Admitting all this to be true, yet it does not ſeem ſo good and laudable a way to puniſh one Fault by another: But let no man encourage himſelf in an evil way with this hope, that he ſhall eſcape the Cenſure of men: When I have ſaid all I can, there will, I fear, be evil-ſpeaking enough in the World to chaſtiſe them that do ill: And though we ſhould hold our peace, there will be bad tongues enow to reproach men with their evil doings. I wiſh we could but be perſwaded to make the Experiment for a little while, whether men would not be ſufficiently laſh'd for their Faults, though we ſate by and ſaid nothing.

So that there is no need at all that good Men ſhould be concern'd in this odious Work. There will always be Offenders and *Malefactors* enow to be the *Executioners* to inflict this puniſhment upon one another. Therefore let no man preſume upon Impunity on the one hand; and on the other, let no man deſpair but that this buſineſs will be ſufficiently done one way or other. I am very much miſtaken, if we may not ſafely truſt an ill-natur'd World that there will be no failure of Juſtice in this kind.

And here, if I durſt, I would have ſaid a word or two concerning that more publick ſort of *Obloquy* by *Lampoons* and *Libels*, ſo much in faſhion in this witty Age. But I have no mind to provoke a very terrible ſort of men. Yet thus much I hope may be ſaid without offence, that how much ſoever men are pleas'd to ſee others abuſed in this kind, yet it is always grievous when it comes to their own turn: However I cannot but hope that every man that impartially conſiders, muſt own it to be a Fault of a very high nature, to revile thoſe whom God hath placed in Authority over us, and *to ſlander the footſteps of the Lord's Anointed:* Eſpecially ſince it is ſo expreſly written, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Rulers of thy People.*

Having repreſented the great Evil of this Vice,it might not now be improper to ſay ſomething to thoſe who ſuffer by it. Are we guilty of the evil ſaid of us? Let us reform, and cut off all occaſions for the future; and ſo turn the malice of our Enemies to our own advantage, and defeat their ill intentions by making ſo good an uſe of it: And then it will be well for us to have been evil ſpoken of.

Are we innocent? We may ſo much the better bear it patiently: imitating herein the Pattern of our *Bleſſed Saviour, Who when he was reviled, reviled not again, but committed himſelf to him that judgeth righteouſly.*

We may conſider likewiſe,that though it be a misfortune to be evil-ſpoken of, it is their fault that do it, and not ours; and therefore ſhould not put us into Paſſion, becauſe another man's being injurious to me is no good reaſon why I ſhould be uneaſie to my ſelf. We ſhould not revenge the injuries done to us, no not upon them that do them, much leſs upon our ſelves. Let no man's Provocation make thee to loſe thy Patience. Be not ſuch a fool, as to part with any one Vertue, becauſe ſome men are ſo malicious as to endeavour to rob thee of the Reputation of all the reſt. When men ſpeak ill of thee, do as *Plato* ſaid he would do in that caſe, *Live ſo, as that no body may believe them.*

All that now remains is to reflect upon what hath been ſaid, and to urge you and my ſelf to do accordingly. For all is nothing, if we do not practiſe what we ſo plainly ſee to be our Duty. Many are ſo taken up with the deep *Points* and *Myſteries* of Religion, that they never think of the common *Duties* and *Offices* of humane Life. But *Faith* and a *good Life* are ſo far from claſhing with one another, that the *Chriſtian Religion* hath made them inſeparable. True *Faith* is neceſſary in order to a *good Life*, and a *good Life* is the genuine product of a *right Belief*; and therefore the *one* never ought to be preſs'd to the prejudice of the *other.*

I foreſee what will be ſaid, becauſe I have heard it ſo often ſaid in the like caſe; that there is *not one word of Jeſus Chriſt in all this.* No more is there in the *Text.* And yet I hope that *Jeſus Chriſt* is truly preach'd, whenever his *Will* and *Laws*, and the *Duties* injoyn'd by the *Chriſtian Religion* are inculcated upon us.

But ſome men are pleaſed to ſay, that *this is mere Morality:* I anſwer,that this is *Scripture-Morality* and *Chriſtian-Morality*, and who hath any thing to ſay againſt *that?* Nay, I will go yet further, that no man ought to pretend to believe the *Chriſtian Religion*, who lives in the neglect of ſo plain a *Duty*; and in the practice of a *Sin* ſo clearly condemn'd by it, as this of *evil-ſpeaking* is.

But becauſe *the Word of God is quick and powerful, and ſharper than a two-edged Sword,* yea ſharper than *Calumny* it ſelf; and pierceth the very Hearts and Conſciences of men, laying us open to our ſelves, and convincing us of our more ſecret as well as our more viſible Faults; I ſhall therefore at one view repreſent to you what is diſperſedly ſaid concerning this *Sin* in the *Holy Word of God.*

And I have purpoſely reſerved this to the laſt, becauſe it is more perſwaſive
and penetrating than any Humane Diſcourſe. And to this end be pleaſed
to conſider in what company the *Holy Ghoſt* doth uſually mention this *Sin.*
There is ſcarce any *black Catalogue* of *Sins* in the *Bible* but we find this among
them; in the company of the very worſt *Actions* and moſt irregular Matth.15.
Paſſions of men. *Out of the heart,* ſays our *Saviour, proceed evil thoughts,* 19.
murders, adulteries, fornications, falſe-witneſs, evil-ſpeakings. And the *Apoſtle*
ranks *back-biters* with *fornicators,* and *murderers,* and *haters of God;* and Rom.1.29.
with thoſe of whom it is expreſly ſaid that *they ſhall not inherit the Kingdom* 1Cor.6.10.
of God.

And when he enumerates the Sins of *the laſt times, Men,* ſays he, *ſhall be* 2 Tim.3.2,
lovers of themſelves, covetous, boaſters, evil-ſpeakers, without natural affection, 3.
perfidious, falſe accuſers, &c. And which is the ſtrangeſt of all, they who are ſaid to be guilty of theſe great Vices and Enormities are noted by the *Apoſtle* to be great pretenders to Religion; for ſo it follows in the next words, *Having a form of godlineſs, but denying the power thereof.* So that it is no new thing for men to make a more than ordinary profeſſion of *Chriſtianity,* and yet at the ſame time to live in a moſt palpable contradiction to the Precepts of that *Holy Religion:* As if any pretence to *Myſtery* and I know not what extraordinary *attainments* in the knowledge of *Chriſt,* could exempt men from obedience to his Laws, and ſet them above the Vertues of a good Life.

And now after all this, do we hardly think *that* to be a Sin, which is in *Scripture* ſo frequently rank'd with *Murther* and *Adultery* and the *blackeſt Crimes;* ſuch as are inconſiſtent with the life and power of Religion, and will certainly ſhut men out of the Kingdom of God? Do we believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God?* and can we allow our ſelves in the common practice of a *Sin,* than which there is hardly any Fault of mens Lives more frequently mention'd, more ſeverely reprov'd, and more odiouſly branded in that *Holy Book?*

Conſider ſeriouſly theſe Texts: *Who ſhall abide in thy Tabernacle, who ſhall* Pſal.15.1.
dwell in thy holy Hill? He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach againſt his neighbour. Have ye never heard what our *Saviour* ſays, that *of every idle word we muſt give an account in the Day of Judgment;* that *by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemn'd?* What can be more ſevere than that of St. *James? If any man among you ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's Religion is vain.*

To conclude: The *Sin,* which I have now warned men againſt, is plainly condemn'd by the *Word of God;* and the *Duty* which I have now been perſwading you to, is eaſie for every man to underſtand, not hard for any man, that can but reſolve to keep a good guard upon himſelf for ſome time, by the grace of God to practice; and moſt reaſonable for all *Men,* but eſpecially for all *Chriſtians,* to obſerve. It is as eaſie as a *reſolute ſilence* upon juſt occaſion, as reaſonable as *prudence* and *juſtice* and *charity,* and the preſervation of *peace* and *good will* among men, can make it; and of as neceſſary and indiſpenſible an obligation, as the Authority of God can render any thing.

Upon all which Conſiderations let us every one of us be perſwaded to take
up *David*'s deliberate Reſolution, *I ſaid, I will take heed to my ways, that I* Pſal.39.1.
offend not with my tongue. And I do verily believe, that would we but heartily endeavour to amend this one Fault, we ſhould ſoon be better Men in our whole lives: I mean, that the correcting of this *Vice,* together with thoſe that are nearly allied to it, and may at the ſame time, and almoſt with the ſame reſolution and care be corrected, would make us Owners of a great many conſiderable Vertues, and carry us on a good way towards perfection; it

being hardly to be imagin'd that a man that makes conſcience of his *Words* ſhould not take an equal or a greater care of his *Actions*. And this I take to be both the true meaning, and the true reaſon of that ſaying of St. *James*, and with which I ſhall conclude: *If any man offend not in word, the ſame is a perfect man.*

Now the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, to do his will; working in you always that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt; To whom be glory for ever, *Amen.*

CONCERNING

The Divinity and Incarnation

OF OUR

BLESSED SAVIOUR.

AN
Advertiſement
TO THE
READER.

THE *following* Sermons *were preached ſeveral years ago, in the Church of* St. Lawrence-Jewry *in* London; *and being now reviſed and enlarged by the* Author *are here made publick: The true Reaſon whereof, was not that which is commonly alledged for Printing Books, the Importunity of* Friends; *but the importunate Clamours and malicious Calumnies of* Others, *whom the* Author *heartily prays God to forgive, and to give them better Minds: And to grant that the enſuing Diſcourſes, the Publication whereof was in ſo great a degree neceſſary, may by his Bleſſing prove in ſome meaſure uſeful.*

SERMON XLIII.

Concerning the Divinity of our B. Saviour.

Preached in the
Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *Decemb.* the 30th. 1679.

JOHN I. 14.

The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt amongſt us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

THESE words contain in them three great Points concerning our B. *Saviour*, the Author and Founder of our Faith and Religion.

Firſt, His Incarnation, *the Word was made*, or became, *fleſh*.

Secondly, His Life and Converſation here among us, *and dwelt amongſt us*; ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, he pitched his Tabernacle amongſt us; he lived here below in this World, and for a time made his reſidence and abode with us.

Thirdly, That in this ſtate of his Humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his Divinity; whilſt he appeared as a *Man* and liv'd amongſt us, there were great and glorious Teſtimonies given of him that he was the *Son of God*: and that in ſo peculiar a manner as no Creature can be ſaid to be: *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, &c.

I ſhall begin with the *Firſt* of theſe, his *Incarnation*; as moſt proper for this Solemn Time, which hath for many Ages been ſet apart for the commemoration of the Nativity and Incarnation of our B. *Saviour*. *The Word was made fleſh*, that is, he who is perſonally called the *Word*, and whom the *Evangeliſt* St. *John* had ſo fully deſcribed in the beginning of this *Goſpel*, he became fleſh, that is, aſſumed our Nature and became Man; for ſo the word *fleſh* is frequently uſed in Scripture for *Man* or humane nature: *O thou* Pſal. 65. 2. *that heareſt prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come*, that is, to thee ſhall *all men* addreſs their Supplications: again, *The glory of the Lord ſhall be revealed,* Iſa. 40. 5, 6. *and all fleſh ſhall ſee it together*, that is, *all men* ſhall behold and acknowledge it; and then it follows, *all fleſh is graſs*, ſpeaking of the frailty and mortality of *Man*: And ſo likewiſe in the *New Teſtament*, our B. *Saviour* foretelling the miſery that was coming upon the *Jewiſh* Nation, ſays, *Ex-* Matt. 24. 22. *cept thoſe days ſhould be ſhortned no fleſh ſhould be ſaved*, that is, *no man* ſhould eſcape and ſurvive that great calamity and deſtruction which was coming upon them: *By the works of the Law*, ſays the *Apoſtle*, *ſhall no fleſh*, Gal. 2. 16. that is, no man *be juſtified*.

So that by the *Word*'s being *made* or becoming *fleſh*, the *Evangeliſt* did not intend that he aſſumed only a human Body without a Soul, and was united only to a human Body, which was the Hereſie of *Apollinaris* and his Followers, but that he became *Man*, that is, aſſumed the whole human Nature, Body and Soul. And it is likewiſe very probable that the *Evangeliſt* did purpoſely chuſe the word *fleſh*, which ſignifies the frail and mortal part of Man, to denote to us that the Son of God did aſſume our Nature with all its infirmities, and became ſubject to the common frailty and mortality of human Nature.

The words thus explain'd contain that *great Myſtery of Godlineſs*, as the *Apoſtle* calls it, or of the *Chriſtian* Religion, *viz.* the Incarnation of the Son of God, which St. *Paul* expreſſeth by the appearance or manifeſtation of God in the fleſh. *And without controverſie great is the myſtery of godlineſs, God was manifeſted in the fleſh*, that is, he appeared in human Nature, he became Man; or, as St. *John* expreſſeth it in the Text, *The Word was made fleſh.* 1 Tim. 3. 16.

But for the more clear and full explication of theſe words, we will conſider theſe two things.

Firſt, the Perſon that is here ſpoken of, and who is ſaid to be Incarnate, or to be *made fleſh*, namely *the Word.*

Secondly, the Myſtery it ſelf, or the nature of this Incarnation, ſo far as the Scripture hath revealed and declared it to us.

I. I. We will conſider the Perſon that is here ſpoken of, and who is ſaid to be Incarnate or to be *made fleſh*, and who is ſo frequently in this *Chapter* called by the Name or Title of *the Word*; namely the eternal and only begotten Son of God; for ſo we find him deſcribed in the Text, *The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt amongſt us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*, &c. that is, ſuch as became ſo great and glorious a Perſon as deſerves the Title of *the only begotten Son of God.*

For the explaining of this Name or Title of the *Word* given by St. *John* to our B. *Saviour*, we will conſider theſe two things.

Firſt, The reaſon of this Name or Title of the *Word*, and what probably might be the Occaſion why this *Evangeliſt* inſiſts ſo much upon it, and makes ſo frequent mention of it.

Secondly, The Deſcription it ſelf, which is given of him under this Name or Title of the *Word* by this *Evangeliſt*, in his entrance into his Hiſtory of the Goſpel.

I. We will enquire into the Reaſon of this Name or Title of the *Word*, which is here given to our B. *Saviour* by this *Evangeliſt*: And what might probably be the Occaſion why he inſiſts ſo much upon it and makes ſo frequent mention of it. I ſhall conſider theſe two things diſtinctly and ſeverally.

Firſt, *The Reaſon of this Name or Title of the Word, here given by the* Evangeliſt *to our* B. Saviour. And he ſeems to have done it in compliance with the common way of ſpeaking among the *Jews*, who frequently call the *Meſſias* by the Name of *the Word of the Lord*; of which I might give many inſtances: But there is one very remarkable, in the *Targum* of *Jonathan*, which renders thoſe words of the *Pſalmiſt*, which the *Jews* acknowledge to be ſpoken of the *Meſſias*, *viz. The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, ſit thou on my right hand*, &c. I ſay it renders them thus, *The Lord ſaid unto his* Word, *ſit thou on my right hand*, &c. And ſo likewiſe *Philo* the *Jew* calls him *by whom God made the World*, *the Word of God*, and *the Son of God.* And *Plato* probably had the ſame Notion from the *Jews*, which made *Amelius* the

Platoniſt, when he read the beginning of St. *John*'s Goſpel, to ſay, *this* Barbarian *agrees with Plato, ranking the* Word *in the order of Principles*; meaning that he made the *Word* the *Principle* or efficient Cauſe of the World, as *Plato* alſo hath done.

And this Title of the *Word* was ſo famouſly known to be given to the *Meſſias*, that even the Enemies of *Chriſtianity* took notice of it. *Julian* the *Apoſtate* calls *Chriſt* by this Name: And *Mahomet* in his *Alchoran* gives this Name of the *Word* to *Jeſus the Son of Mary*. But St. *John* had probably no reference to *Plato* any otherwiſe than as the *Gnoſticks*, againſt whom he wrote, made uſe of ſeveral of *Plato*'s words and notions. So that in all probability St. *John* gives our *B. Saviour* this Title with regard to the *Jews* more eſpecially, who anciently call'd the *Meſſias* by this Name.

Secondly, We will in the next place conſider, *What might probably be the Occaſion why this* Evangeliſt *makes ſo frequent mention of this Title of the* Word, *and inſiſts ſo much upon it*. And it ſeems to be this: Nay, I think that hardly any doubt can be made of it, ſince the moſt ancient of the *Fathers*, who lived neareſt the time of St. *John*, do confirm it to us.

St. *John*, who ſurvived all the Apoſtles, liv'd to ſee thoſe *Hereſies* which ſprang up in the beginnings of *Chriſtianity*, during the lives of the *Apoſtles* grown up to a great height, to the great prejudice and diſturbance of the *Chriſtian* Religion; I mean the Hereſies of *Ebion* and *Cerinthus*, and the ſeveral *Sects* of the *Gnoſticks* which began from *Simon Magus*, and were continued and carried on by *Valentinus* and *Baſilides*, *Carpocrates* and *Menander*: Some of which expreſly deny'd the Divinity of our *Saviour*, aſſerting him to have been a mere man, and to have had no manner of exiſtence before he was born of the *B. Virgin*, as *Euſebius* and *Epiphanius* tells us particularly concerning *Ebion*: Which thoſe who hold the ſame Opinion now in our days may do well to conſider from whence it had its Original.

Others of them, I ſtill mean the *Gnoſticks*, had corrupted the ſimplicity of the *Chriſtian* Doctrine by mingling with it the fancies and conceits of the *Jewiſh Cabbaliſts*, and of the *Schools* of *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, and of the *Chaldæan* Philoſophy more ancient than either; as may be ſeen in *Euſebius de Preparat. Evan.*; and by jumbling all theſe together they had framed a confuſed *Genealogy* of *Deities*, which they call by ſeveral glorious Names, and all of them by the general Name of *Æons* or *Ages*: Among which they reckon'd Ζωὴ & λόγος & Μονογενὴς & Πλήρωμα, that is, the *Life*, and the *Word*, and the *Only begotten*, and the *Fulneſs*, and many other Divine *Powers* and *Emanations* which they fancied to be ſucceſſively derived from one another.

And they alſo diſtinguiſhed between the *Maker of the World* whom they called the *God* of the *Old Teſtament*, and the *God* of the *New*: And between *Jeſus* and *Chriſt*. *Jeſus* according to the Doctrine of *Cerinthus*, as *Irenæus* tells us, being the Man that was born of the Virgin, and *Chriſt* or the *Meſſias* being that *Divine Power* or *Spirit* which afterwards deſcended into *Jeſus* and dwelt in him.

If it were poſſible, yet it would be to no purpoſe, to go about to reconcile theſe wild conceits with one another; and to find out for what reaſon they were invented, unleſs it were to amuſe the People with theſe *high ſwelling words of vanity* and a pretence of *knowledge falſly ſo called*, as the *Apoſtle* ſpeaks in alluſion to the Name of *Gnoſticks*, that is to ſay, *the Men of knowledge*, which they proudly aſſum'd to themſelves, as if the knowledge of Myſteries of a more ſublime nature did peculiarly belong to them.

In oppoſition to all theſe vain and groundleſs conceits, St. *John* in the beginning of his *Goſpel* chuſes to ſpeak of our *B. Saviour*, the Hiſtory of whoſe Life and Death he was going to write, by the Name or Title of the *Word*, a *term* very famous among thoſe *Sects*: And ſhews that this *Word of God*, which was alſo the Title the *Jews* anciently gave to the *Meſſias*, did exiſt before he aſſumed a human Nature, and even from all Eternity; And that to this eternal *Word* did truly belong all thoſe Titles which they kept ſuch a canting ſtir about, and which they did with ſo much ſenſeleſs nicety and ſubtilty diſtinguiſh from one another, as if they had been ſo many ſeveral *Emanations* from the *Deity*: And he ſhews that this *Word of God*, was really and truly the *Life*, and the *Light*, and the *Fulneſs*, and the *only begotten of the Father*; v. 5. *In him was the* Life, *and the* Life *was the* Light of Men; and v. 6. *And the* Light *ſhineth in darkneſs, and the darkneſs comprehended it not*: and v. 7, 8, 9. where the *Evangeliſt* ſpeaking of *John* the *Baptiſt* ſays of him, that *he came for a witneſs, to bear witneſs of the* Light; and that *he was not that* Light, *but was ſent to bear witneſs of that* Light: *And that* Light *was the true* Light *which coming into the World enlightens every man*: And v. 14. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the* only begotten of the Father, full *of grace and truth*: And v. 16. *And of his fulneſs we all receive*, &c. You ſee here is a perpetual Alluſion to the glorious Titles which they gave to their *Æons* as if they had been ſo many ſeveral *Deities*.

In ſhort, the *Evangeliſt* ſhews that all this fanciful *Genealogy* of *Divine Emanations*, with which the *Gnoſticks* made ſo great a noiſe, was mere conceit and imagination; and that all theſe glorious Titles did really meet in the *Meſſias* who is the *Word*, and who before his Incarnation was from all eternity with *God*, partaker of his Divine Nature and Glory.

I have declared this the more fully and particularly, becauſe the knowledge of it ſeems to me to be the only true Key to the Interpretation of this Diſcourſe of St. *John* concerning our *Saviour* under the Name and Title of the *Word*. And ſurely it is a quite wrong way for any Man to go about by the mere ſtrength and ſubtilty of his Reaſon and Wit, though never ſo great, to interpret an ancient Book, without underſtanding and conſidering the Hiſtorical occaſion of it, which is the only thing that can give true light to it.

And this was the great and fatal miſtake of *Socinus*, to go to interpret Scripture merely by Criticiſing upon words, and ſearching into all the ſenſes that they are poſſibly capable of, till he can find one, though never ſo forc'd and foreign, that will ſave harmleſs the Opinion which he was beforehand reſolved to maintain even againſt the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe of the Text which he undertakes to interpret: Juſt as if a Man ſhould interpret ancient *Statutes* and *Records* by mere Critical skill in words, without regard to the true Occaſion upon which they were made, and without any manner of knowledge and inſight into the Hiſtory of the Age in which they were written.

I ſhall now proceed to the Second thing which I propoſed to conſider, namely,

II. *The Deſcription here given of the* Word *by this* Evangeliſt *in his entrance into his Hiſtory of the Goſpel. In the beginning*, ſays he, *was the* Word, *and the* Word *was with* God, *and the* Word *was God*: *The ſame was in the beginning with God*: *All things were made by him, and without was not any thing made that was made.*

In which Paſſage of the *Evangeliſt* four things are ſaid of the *Word* which will require a more particular Explication.

Firſt, That *he was in the beginning.*
Secondly, That *he was in the beginning with God.*
Thirdly, That *he was God.*
Fourthly, That *all were made by him.*

1*ſt*, That *he was in the beginning*, ἐν ἀρχῇ, which is the ſame with ἀπ' ἀρχῆς *from the beginning*, where ſpeaking of *Chriſt* by the name of *eternal* 1 John 1. 1. *life*, and of the *Word of life*, *That*, ſays he, *which was from the beginning*. *Nonnus*, the ancient *Paraphraſt* of St. *John*'s Goſpel, by way of explication of what is meant by his being *in the beginning*, adds, that he was ἄχρονος, *without time*, that is, before all time; and if ſo, then he was from all eternity: *In the beginning was the Word*, that is, when things *began to be made* he was; not *then* began to be, but *then* already was, and did exiſt before any thing was made; and conſequently is without beginning, for that which was never made could have no beginning of its Being: and ſo the *Jews* uſed to deſcribe *Eternity*, *before the World was*, and *before the foundation of the World*, as alſo in ſeveral places of the *New Teſtament*. And ſo likewiſe *Solomon* deſcribes the Eternity of *Wiſdom*, *The Lord*, ſays he, *poſſeſſed* Prov. 8. 22, *me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old: I was ſet up from ever-* 23, &c. *laſting, from the beginning or ever the Earth was: When he prepared the Heaven I was there; then I was with him as one brought up with him, rejoicing always before him*: And ſo *Juſtin Martyr* explains this very expreſſion of St. *John*, that he was, or had a Being before all Ages: So likewiſe *Athenagoras*, a moſt ancient *Chriſtian* Writer, *God*, ſays he, *who is an inviſible Mind, had from the beginning the* Word *in himſelf.*

2*ly*. That *in the beginning the Word was with God*: And ſo *Solomon*, when he would expreſs the Eternity of *Wiſdom*, ſays, *it was with God*: And ſo likewiſe the Son of *Sirach* ſpeaking of *Wiſdom*, ſays, it was μετὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ *with God*; And ſo the ancient *Jews* often called the *Word of God*, the *Word which is before the Lord*, that is, with him, or in his preſence: In like manner the *Evangeliſt* ſays here, that the *Word was with God*, that is, it was always together with him, partaking of his Happineſs and Glory: To which our *Saviour* refers in his Prayer, *Glorify me with thine own ſelf with the glory which I* John 17. 5. *had with thee before the World was.* And this *being with God* the *Evangeliſt* oppoſeth to his *appearing* and *being manifeſted* to the World, *v.* 10. *He was in the World, and the World was made by him, and the World knew him not*; that is, he who from all eternity *was with God*, appeared in the World, and when he did ſo, though he had made the World, yet the World would not own him. And this oppoſition between his *being with God* and his *being manifeſted* in the World, the ſame St. *John* mentions elſewere, *I ſhew unto you* 1 John 1, 2. *that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us.*

3*ly*. That *he was God*: And ſo *Juſtin Martyr* ſays of him, That *he was God before the World*, that is, from all Eternity: But then the *Evangeliſt* adds by way of Explication, *the ſame was in the beginning with God*, that is, though the *Word* was truly and really God, yet he was not *God the Father*, who is the Fountain of the Deity, but an Emanation from him, the only begotten Son of God, from all eternity *with him*; to denote to us, that which is commonly called by *Divines*, and for any thing I could ever ſee properly enough, *the diſtinction of Perſons* in the Deity; at leaſt we know not a fitter word whereby to expreſs that great Myſtery.

4thly, That *all things were made by him*. This ſeems to refer to the de- Gen. 1. ſcription which *Moſes* makes of the Creation, where God is repreſented creating things by his *Word*; *God ſaid, Let there be light, and there was light*: Pſal. 33. 6. And ſo likewiſe the *Pſalmiſt*, *By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the Hoſt of them by the breath of his mouth*: And ſo St. *Peter* 2 Pet. 3. 5. alſo expreſſeth the Creation of the World, *By the Word of the Lord the Heavens were of old, and the Earth made out of Water*: And in the ancient Books of the *Chaldeans* and the verſes aſcribed to *Orpheus*, the *Maker of the World* is called the *Word*, and the *Divine Word*: And ſo *Tertullian* tells the *Pagans*, that by their *Philoſophers* the *Maker of the World was called* λόγος, the *Word*, or *Reaſon*: And *Philo* the *Jew* following *Plato*, who himſelf moſt probably had it from the *Jews*, ſays, that the World was created by the *Word*; whom he calls the *Name of God*, and the *Image of God*, and the *Son of God*: *two* of which glorious Titles are aſcribed to him, together with *that* of *Maker of the* World, by the Author of the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*; *In theſe laſt days*, ſays he, *God hath ſpoken to us by his Son, by whom alſo he made the Worlds: Who is the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs Image of his per-* Coloſ. 1. 15, 16, 17. *ſon*: And to the ſame purpoſe St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of *Chriſt*, calls him *the Image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every Creature*, that is, born before any thing was created, as does evidently follow from the Reaſon given in the next words why he call'd him the *firſt-born of every Creature*, *for by him were all things created that are in Heaven and in Earth*, *viſible and inviſible*; *all things were created by him and for him*, *and he is before all things*, *and by him all things ſubſiſt*: From whence it is plain, that by his being *the firſt-born of every Creature* thus much at leaſt is to be underſtood, that he was before all Creatures, and therefore he himſelf cannot be a Creature, unleſs he could be before himſelf: Nay the *Apoſtle* ſays it expreſly in this very Text in which he is called the *firſt-born of every Creature*, or *of the whole Creation*, that *he is before all things*, that is, he had a Being before there was any created Being, he was before all Creatures both in Duration and in Dignity; for ſo muſt he of neceſſity be, if *all things were made by him*; for as the Maker is always before the thing which is made, ſo is he alſo better and of greater Dignity.

And yet I muſt acknowledge, that there ſeems to be no ſmall difficulty in the Interpretation I have given of this expreſſion in which *Chriſt* is ſaid by the *Apoſtle* to be *the firſt-born of every Creature*, or of the whole Creation; becauſe in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech the *firſt-born* is of the ſame Nature with thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the *firſt-born*: And if ſo, then he muſt be a Creature as well as thoſe in reſpect of whom he is ſaid to be the *firſt-born*: This is the Objection in its full ſtrength, and I do own it to have a very plauſible appearance: And yet I hope before I have done, to ſatisfie any one that will conſider things impartially and without prejudice, and will duly attend to the ſcope of the *Apoſtle's* reaſoning in this *Text*, and compare it with other parallel places of the *New Teſtament*, that it neither is, nor can be the *Apoſtle's* meaning in affirming *Chriſt* to be the *firſt-born of every Creature* to inſinuate that the *Son of God* is a *Creature*.

For how can this poſſibly agree with that which follows and is given as the Reaſon why *Chriſt* is ſaid to be the *firſt-born of every Creature*? namely, becauſe *all things were made by him*: The *Apoſtle's* words are theſe, *the firſt-born of every Creature*, or *of the whole Creation*, *for by him all things were created*: But now, according to the *Socinian* interpretation, this would be a Reaſon juſt the contrary way: For if *all thing were created by him*, then he himſelf is not a *Creature*.

So that the *Apoſtle's* meaning in this expreſſion muſt either be that the *Son*

of God our *B. Saviour* was before all Creatures, as it is ſaid preſently after that *he is before all things*; and then the Reaſon which is added will be very proper and pertinent, *he is before all things* becauſe *all things were created by him:* In which ſenſe it is very probable that the *Son* of God elſewhere calls himſelf *the beginning of the Creation of God*, meaning by it, as the *Phi-* Rev. 3. 14.
loſophers moſt frequently uſe the word ἀρχὴ, the *Principle* or *Efficient* Cauſe of the Creation: And ſo we find the ſame word, which our *Tranſlation* renders *the beginning*, uſed together with the word *firſt-born*, as if they were of the ſame importance; *the beginning and firſt-born from the dead*, that is, Col. 1. 18.
the *Principle* and *Efficient* Cauſe of the Reſurrection of the Dead.

Or elſe, which ſeems to me to be the moſt probable, and indeed the true meaning of the Expreſſion, by this Title of *the firſt-born of every Creature*, the *Apoſtle* means, that he was *Lord* and *Heir* of the *Creation*: For the *firſt-born* is natural *Heir*, and *Juſtinian* tells us, that *Heir* did anciently ſignifie *Lord*: And therefore the Scripture uſes theſe *terms* promiſcuouſly, and as if they were equivalent: for whereas St. *Peter* ſaith of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that *he is* Acts 10. 36.
Lord of all, St. *Paul* calls him *Heir of all things*: And then the Reaſon given Rom. 4. 14.
by the *Apoſtle* why he calls him *the firſt-born of every Creature* will be very fit and proper, becauſe *all things were created by him*: For well may he be ſaid to be *Lord* and *Heir* of the Creation who *made all things that were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made.*

And this will yet appear much more evident, if we conſider, that the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews*, (who, by ſeveral of the *Ancients*, was thought to be St. *Paul*, where he gives to *Chriſt* ſome of the very ſame Titles which St. *Paul* in his *Epiſtle* to the *Coloſſians* had done, calling him, the *Image of God*, and the *Maker of the World*) does inſtead of the Title of the *firſt-born of every Creature*, call him *the Heir of all things*; and then adds, as the Reaſon of this Title, that *by* him God made the Worlds; *God*, ſays he, *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath conſtituted Heir of all things: Who being the brightneſs of his glory, and the expreſs Image of his perſon, and upholding all things by the Word of his power*, &c. Which is exactly parallel with that paſſage of St. *Paul* to the *Coloſſians*, where *Chriſt* is call'd *the Image of the inviſible God*, and where it is likewiſe ſaid of him, that *he made all things*, and that *by him all things do ſubſiſt*, which the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* in different words, but to the very ſame ſenſe, expreſſeth by his *upholding all things by the Word of his power*; that is, by the ſame *powerful Word* by which all things at firſt were made: But then inſtead of calling him *the firſt-born of every Creature*, becauſe *all things were made by him*, he calls him the *Heir of all things*, *by whom God alſo made the Worlds.*

And indeed that expreſſion of *the firſt-born of every Creature* cannot admit of any other ſenſe which will agree ſo well with the Reaſon that follows as the ſenſe which I have mentioned; namely, that he is therefore *Heir and Lord of the whole Creation*, becauſe *all Creatures were made* by him; which exactly anſwers thoſe words of the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews*, *whom he hath conſtituted Heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the Worlds.*

And now I appeal to any ſober and conſiderate Man, whether the Interpretation which I have given of that expreſſion of the *firſt-born of every Creature* be not much more agreeable both to the tenour of the Scripture, and to the plain ſcope and deſign of the *Apoſtle's* Argument and Reaſoning in that Text.

I have inſiſted the longer upon this, becauſe it is the great Text upon which the *Arians* lay the main ſtrength and ſtreſs of their Opinion that the Son of God is a Creature, becauſe he is ſaid by the *Apoſtle* to be *the firſt-*

born of every Creature; by which expreſſion if no more be meant than that he is *Heir* and *Lord* of the whole Creation, which I have ſhewed to be very agreeable both to the uſe of the word *firſt-born* among the *Hebrews*, and likewiſe to the deſcription given of Chriſt in that parallel Text which I cited out of the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, then this expreſſion of *the firſt-born of every Creature* is nothing at all to the purpoſe either of the *Arians* or the *Socinians*, to prove the Son of God to be a Creature: Beſides, that the Interpretation which I have given of it makes the *Apoſtle*'s ſenſe much more currrent and eaſie; for then the Text will run thus, who *is the Image of the inviſible God, Heir and Lord of the whole Creation, for by him all things were made.*

So that in theſe *four* expreſſions of the *Evangeliſt* which I have explain'd there are theſe *four* things diſtinctly affirmed of the *Word*.

Firſt, That *he was in the beginning*, that is, that he already was and did exiſt when things began to be created: He was before any thing was made, and conſequently is without any beginning of Time; for that which was never made could have no beginning of its Being.

Secondly, That in that ſtate of his exiſtence before the Creation of the World he was partaker of the Divine Glory and Happineſs: And this I have ſhew'd to be the meaning of that expreſſion, *and the Word was with God*: For thus our *B. Saviour* does explain his being with God before the World was, *And now, O Father, glorifie me with thy own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee before the World was.*

Thirdly, That *he was God*; *And the Word was God.* Not *God the Father*, who is the Principle and fountain of the Deity: To prevent that miſtake, after he had ſaid that *the Word was God*, he immediately adds in the next *verſe*, *the ſame was in the beginning with God*: He was God by participation of the Divine Nature and Happineſs together with the *Father*, and by way of derivation from him as the Light is from the Sun: Which is the common illuſtration which the ancient *Fathers* of the *Chriſtian* Church give us of this Myſtery, and is perhaps the beſt and fitteſt that can be given of it. For among finite Beings it is not to be expected, becauſe not poſſible, to find any exact reſemblance of that which is infinite, and conſequently is incomprehenſible, becauſe whatever is infinite is for that reaſon incomprehenſible by a finite underſtanding, which is too ſhort and ſhallow to meaſure that which is infinite; and whoever attempts it will ſoon find himſelf out of his depth.

Fourthly, That *all things were made by him*: Which could not have been more emphatically expreſs'd than it is here by the *Evangeliſt*, after the manner of the *Hebrews*, who when they would ſay a thing with the greateſt force and certainty, are wont to expreſs it both affirmatively and negatively; as, *He ſhall live and not die*, that is, he ſhall moſt aſſuredly live; ſo here, *All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*; that is, he made all Creatures without exception, and conſequently he himſelf is not a Creature, becauſe it is evidently impoſſible that any thing ſhould ever make it ſelf: But then if it be, and yet was never made, it is certainly true, that he always was, even from all Eternity.

All theſe Aſſertions are plainly and expreſly contain'd in this Deſcription which the *Evangeliſt* St. *John* here makes of the Word; and this according to the Interpretation of theſe Expreſſions by the unanimous conſent of the moſt ancient *Writers* of the Chriſtian Church: who, ſome of them, had the advantage of receiving it from the immediate Diſciples of St. *John*:

Which ſurely is no ſmall prejudice againſt any newly invented and contrary Interpretation; as I ſhall hereafter more fully ſhew, when I come to conſider the ſtrange and extravagant Interpretation which the *Socinians* make of this Paſſage of St. *John*; which is plain enough of it ſelf, if they under a pretence of explaining and making it more clear had not diſturb'd and darken'd it.

Now from this deſcription which the Evangeliſt here gives of the *Word*, and which I have ſo largely explain'd in the foregoing Diſcourſe, theſe *three Corallaries* or Concluſions do neceſſarily follow.

Firſt, That the *Word* here deſcribed by St. *John* is not a Creature. This Concluſion is directly againſt the *Arians*, who affirm'd, that the Son of God was a Creature. They grant indeed that he is the firſt of all the Creatures both in *Dignity* and *Duration*; for ſo they underſtand that expreſſion of the *Apoſtle* wherein he is called *the firſt-born of every Creature:* But this I have endeavoured already to ſhew not to be the meaning of that expreſſion.

They grant him indeed to have been God's *Agent* or *Inſtrument* in the Creation of the World, and that all other Creatures beſides himſelf were made by him: But ſtill they contend that he is a Creature and was made: Now this cannot poſſibly conſiſt with what St. *John* ſays of him, that *he was in the beginning*, that is, as hath been already ſhewn, before any thing was made: And likewiſe, becauſe he is ſaid to have *made all things*, *and that without him was not any thing made that was made*; and therefore he himſelf who made all things is neceſſarily excepted out of the condition or rank of a Creature; as the *Apoſtle* reaſons in another Caſe, *He hath put all things under his feet: But when he ſaith all things are put under him*, *it is manifeſt*, *that he is excepted who did put all things under him*: In like manner, *if by him all things were made*, *and without him was not any thing made that was made*, then either he was not made, or he muſt make himſelf; which involves in it a plain Contradiction.

Secondly, That this *Word* was from all Eternity: For if *he was in the beginning*, that is, before any thing was made, he muſt of neceſſity always have been; becauſe whatever is, muſt either have been ſometime made, or muſt always have been; for that which was not, and afterwards is, muſt be made. And this will likewiſe follow from his being ſaid to *be God*, and that in the moſt ſtrict and proper ſenſe, which doth neceſſarily imply his Eternity, becauſe God cannot begin to be, but muſt of neceſſity always have been.

Thirdly, From both theſe it will undeniably follow, that he had an exiſtence before his Incarnation and his being born of the *B. Virgin*. For *if he was in the beginning*, that is, from all Eternity, which I have ſhewn to be the meaning of that expreſſion, then certainly he was before his being born of the *B. Virgin*. And this likewiſe is implied in the Propoſition in the Text, *And the Word was made fleſh*, *viz.* that *Word* which the *Evangeliſt* had before ſo glorioſly deſcribed, that *Word* which *was in the beginning*, *and was with God*, *and was God*, and *by whom all things were made*; I ſay, *that Word* was incarnate and aſſumed a human Nature, and therefore muſt neceſſarily exiſt and have a Being before he could aſſume humanity into an union with his Divinity.

And this Propoſition is directly levelled againſt the *Socinians*, who affirm our *B. Saviour* to be a mere Man, and that he had no exiſtence before he was born of the Virgin *Mary* his Mother: Which Aſſertion of theirs doth perfectly contradict all the former Concluſions which have been drawn from the Deſcription here given by St. *John* of the *Word:* And their Interpretation of this paſſage of St. *John* applying it to *the beginning* of the publication of the *Goſpel*, and to the new *Creation* or Reformation of the World by *Jeſus Chriſt*, doth likewiſe contradict the Interpretation of this paſſage conſtantly received, not only by the ancient *Fathers*, but even by the general conſent of all *Chriſtians* for fifteen hundred years together, as I ſhall hereafter plainly ſhew: For to eſtabliſh this their Opinion, that our B. Saviour was a mere Man, and had no exiſtence before his Birth, they are forc'd to interpret this whole paſſage in the beginning of St. *John's* Goſpel quite to another ſenſe, never mention'd, nor, I believe, thought of by any *Chriſtian* Writer whatſoever before *Socinus:* And it is not eaſie to imagin how any Opinion can be loaded with a greater and heavier prejudice than this is.

And this I ſhould now take into conſideration, and ſhew, beſides the novelty of this Interpretation and the great violence and unreaſonableneſs of it, the utter inconſiſtency of it with other plain Texts of the *New Teſtament.*

But this is wholly matter of Controverſie and will require a large Diſcourſe by it ſelf; I ſhall therefore wave the further proſecution of it at preſent, and apply my ſelf to that which is more practical and proper for the Occaſion of this *Seaſon*: So that at preſent I have done with the *firſt* thing contain'd in the *firſt* part of the Text, *viz.* The *Perſon* here ſpoken of who is ſaid to be Incarnate, namely, the *Word*, it was *He* that *was made fleſh.*

I ſhould then have proceeded to the *Second* thing which I propoſed to conſider, *viz.* The *Myſtery* it ſelf, or the nature of this *Incarnation* ſo far as the Scripture hath revealed and declared it to us, namely, by aſſuming our Nature in ſuch a manner as that the Divinity became united to a human Soul and Body. But this I have already endeavoured in ſome meaſure to explain, and ſhall do it more fully in ſome of the following Diſcourſes upon this Text. I ſhall now only make a ſhort and uſeful reflection upon it with relation to the *Solemnity* of this *Time.*

And it ſhall be to ſtir us up to a thankful acknowledgment of the great love of God to Mankind in the Myſtery of our Redemption by the *Incarnation* of the *Word*, *the only begotten Son* of God: That he ſhould deign to have ſuch a regard to us in our low condition, and to take our Caſe ſo much to heart as to think of redeeming and ſaving Mankind from that depth of miſery into which we had plunged our ſelves; and to do this in ſo wonderful and aſtoniſhing a manner: That God ſhould employ his eternal and only begotten Son, who had been with him from all Eternity, partaker of his Happineſs and Glory, and was *God of God*, to ſave the Sons of Men by ſo infinite and amazing a condeſcention: That God ſhould vouchſafe to become Man, to reconcile Man to God: That he ſhould come down from Heaven to Earth, to raiſe us from Earth to Heaven: That he ſhould aſſume our vile and frail and mortal nature, that he might cloath us with glory and honour and immortality: That he ſhould ſuffer Death to ſave us from Hell, and ſhed his blood to purchaſe eternal Redemption for us.

For certainly the greater the Perſon is that was employed in this merciful Deſign, ſo much the greater is the condeſcention, and the love and goodneſs expreſſed in it ſo much the more admirable: That the Son of God ſhould ſtoop from the height of Glory and Happineſs to the loweſt degree of abaſement and to the very depth of miſery for our ſakes, who were ſo mean and inconſiderable, ſo guilty and obnoxious to the ſeverity of his

Juſtice, ſo altogether unworthy of his Grace and Favour, and ſo very unwilling to receive it when it was ſo freely offer'd to us; for, as the *Evangeliſt* here tells us, *He came to his own, and his own received him not:* To his own Creatures, and they did not own and acknowledge their Maker; to his own Nation and Kindred, and they deſpiſed him and eſteemed him not. Lord! what is Man, that God ſhould be ſo mindful of him; or the Son of Man, that the Son of God ſhould come down from Heaven to viſit him, in ſo much humility and condeſcention, and with ſo much kindneſs and compaſſion?

Bleſſed God and Saviour of Mankind! What ſhall we render to thee for ſuch mighty Love, for ſuch ineſtimable Benefits as thou haſt purchaſed for us, and art ready to confer upon us? What ſhall we ſay to thee, O thou preſerver and lover of Souls, ſo often as we approach thy *H. Table*, there to commemorate this mighty Love of thine to us, and to partake of thoſe invaluable Bleſſings which by thy precious bloodſhedding thou haſt obtained for us? So often as we there remember, that thou waſt pleaſed to aſſume our mortal Nature, on purpoſe to live amongſt us for our Inſtruction, and for our Example, and to lay down thy life for the Redemption of our Souls and for the Expiation of our Sins; and to *take part of fleſh and blood* that thou mighteſt ſhed it for our ſakes: What Affections ſhould theſe thoughts raiſe in us? What Vows and Reſolutions ſhould they engage us in, of perpetual love, and gratitude, and obedience to thee the moſt gracious and moſt glorious Redeemer of Mankind?

And with what Religious Solemnity ſhould we, more eſpecially at this Time, celebrate the *Incarnation* and Birth of the Son of God, by giving praiſe and *glory to God in the higheſt*, and by all poſſible demonſtration of charity and *good-will to men?* And as he was pleaſed to aſſume our Nature, ſo ſhould we, eſpecially at this Seaſon, *put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, that is, ſincerely embrace and practice his Religion, *making no proviſion for the fleſh to fulfill the luſts thereof:* And now that the *Sun of Righteouſneſs* is riſen upon the World, we ſhould *walk as Children of the light, and demean our ſelves decently as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenneſs, not in chambring and wantonneſs, not in ſtrife and envy:* And ſhould be very careful not to abuſe our ſelves by Sin and Senſuality, upon this very conſideration that the Son hath put ſuch an honour and dignity upon us: We ſhould reverence that Nature which God did not diſdain to aſſume and to inhabit here on Earth, and in which he now glorioully reigns in Heaven, at the right hand of his *Father; to him be glory for ever and ever.* Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

Concerning the Divinity of our B. Saviour.

Preached in the
Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *January* 6. 1679.

JOHN I. 14.

The Word was made fleſh.

I Proceed now to proſecute the *third Corollary* or Concluſion, which does neceſſarily follow from the Deſcription which St. *John* in the beginning of his *Goſpel* gives of the *Word*, and which I have ſo largely explain'd in the foregoing Diſcourſe: And it was this,

That *the Word*, here deſcribed by the *Evangeliſt*, *had an exiſtence before his Incarnation and his being born of the B. Virgin*

This *Aſſertion*, I told you, is levelled directly againſt the *Socinians*, who affirm our *B. Saviour* to be a mere Man, and deny that he had any exiſtence before he was born of the Virgin *Mary* his Mother: which *Poſition* of theirs does perfectly contradict all the former *Concluſions* which have been ſo evidently drawn from the Deſcription here given of the *Word*: And not only ſo, but hath forced them to interpret this whole paſſage in the beginning of St. *John*'s *Goſpel* in a very different ſenſe from that which was conſtantly received, not only by the ancient *Fathers*, but by the general conſent of all *Chriſtians* for 1500 years together: For to eſtabliſh this their Opinion of our Saviour's being a mere Man and having no exiſtence before his Birth, they have found it neceſſary to expound this whole paſſage quite to another ſenſe, and ſuch as by their own confeſſion was never mentioned, nor, I believe, thought of by any *Chriſtian* Writer whatſoever before *Socinus*.

For this Reaſon I ſhall very particularly conſider the Interpretation which *Socinus* gives of this Paſſage of St. *John*; and beſides the novelty of it, which they themſelves acknowledge, I make no doubt very plainly to manifeſt the great Violence and Unreaſonableneſs, and likewiſe the Inconſiſtency of it with other plain *Texts* of the *New Teſtament*.

It is very evident what it was that forc'd *Socinus* to ſo ſtrain'd and violent an Interpretation of this Paſſage of the Evangeliſt, namely, that he plainly ſaw how much the obvious, and natural, and generally receiv'd Interpretation of this Paſſage, in all Ages of the *Chriſtian* Church down to his time, ſtood in the way of his *Opinion*, of *Chriſt*'s being a mere Man, which he was ſo fond of, and muſt of neceſſity have quitted, unleſs he would either have denied the Divine Authority of St. *John*'s *Goſpel*, or elſe could ſupplant the common Interpretation of this Paſſage by putting a quite different ſenſe upon it: Which ſenſe he could find no way to ſupport without ſuch pitiful and wretched ſhifts, ſuch precarious and arbitrary Suppoſitions, as a Man of ſo ſharp a Reaſon and Judgment as *Socinus*, could not, I thought, have ever been driven to. But neceſſity hath no Laws either of Reaſon or Modeſty,

deſty, and he who is reſolved to maintain an Opinion which he hath once taken up muſt ſtick at nothing, but muſt break through all difficulties that ſtand in his way: And ſo the *Socinians* have here done, as will, I hope, manifeſtly appear in the following Diſcourſe.

They grant, that by the *Word* is here meant *Chriſt*, by whom God ſpake and declared his Mind and will to the World; which they make to be the whole Reaſon of that Name or Title of the *Word* which is here given him, and not becauſe by Him God made the World: For the *Word* by which God made the World, they tell us, was nothing but the powerful Command of God, and not a Perſon who was deſign'd to be the *Meſſias*. And becauſe, as I have ſhewed before, the ancient *Jews* do make frequent mention of this Title of the *Word of God* by whom they ſay *God made the World*, and do likewiſe apply this Title to the *Meſſias*; therefore to avoid this, *Schlictingius* ſays, that the *Chaldee Paraphraſts*, *Jonathan* and *Onkelos*, do ſometimes put the *Word of God* for *God*, by a *Metonymy* of the Effect for the Cauſe; but then he confidently denies that they do any where diſtinguiſh the *Word* of God from the *Perſon* of God, as they acknowledge that St. *John* here does; nor do they, ſays he, underſtand by the *Word of God* the *Meſſias*, but on the contrary, do oppoſe the *Word of God* to the *Meſſias*: All which is moſt evidently confuted by that paſſage which I cited before out of the *Targum* of *Jonathan*, who renders thoſe words concerning the *Meſſias*, *The Lord ſaid unto my Lord*, &c. thus, *The Lord ſaid unto his* Word, *ſit thou on my right hand*, &c. where you ſee both that the *Word of God* is plainly diſtinguiſhed from *God*, and that it is the Title given to the *Meſſias*; which are the two things which *Schlictingius* doth ſo confidently deny.

This then being agreed on all hands, that by the *Word*, St. *John* means the *Meſſias*, I ſhall in the next place, ſhew by what ſtrained and forced arts of Interpretation the *Socinians* endeavour to avoid the plain and neceſſary conſequence from this Paſſage of St. *John*, namely, that the *Word* had an Exiſtence before he was *made fleſh* and born of the *B. Virgin* his Mother.

This then, in ſhort, is the Interpretation which they give of this Paſſage, than which I think nothing can be more unnatural and violent.

In the beginning; This they will by no means have to refer to the *Creation* of the World, but to the beginning of the *Goſpel*; that is, when the *Goſpel* firſt began to be publiſh'd; then was *Chriſt*, and not before: *And he was with God*, that is, ſays *Socinus*, *Chriſt* as he was the *Word of God*, that is, the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt* which was afterwards by him revealed to the World was firſt only known to God: But all this being ſomewhat hard, firſt to underſtand by *the beginning* not the *beginning* of the *World* but of the *Goſpel*; and then by the *Word* which *was with God* to underſtand the *Goſpel* which before it was revealed was only known to God; they have upon ſecond thoughts found out another meaning of thoſe words; *And the Word was with God*, that is, ſaith *Sclictingius*, *Chriſt* was taken up by God into Heaven, and there inſtructed in the Mind and Will of God, and from thence ſent down into the World again to declare it to Mankind.

And the Word was God; that is, ſay they, *Chriſt* had the Honour and Title of God conferr'd upon him, as *Magiſtrates* alſo have, who in the *Scripture* are called Gods: *He was God*, not by *Nature* but by *Office* and by Divine conſtitution and appointment.

All things were made by him: This they will needs have to be meant of the *Renovation* and *Reformation* of the World by *Jeſus Chriſt*, which is ſeveral times in *Scripture* call'd a *new Creation*.

This, in ſhort, is the Sum of their Interpretation of this Paſſage, which I ſhall now examine, and to which I ſhall oppoſe *three* things as ſo many invincible prejudices againſt it.

Firſt, That not only all the ancient *Fathers* of the *Chriſtian* Church, but ſo far as I can find, all *Interpreters* whatſoever for *fifteen hundred* years together did underſtand this Paſſage of St. *John* in a quite different ſenſe, namely, of the *Creation* of the *material*, and not of the *Renovation* of the *moral* World: And I add further, that the generality of *Chriſtians* did ſo underſtand this Paſſage, as to collect from it as an undoubted *Point* of *Chriſtianity*, that the *Word* had a real exiſtence before he was born of the *B. Virgin*.

And thus not only the Orthodox *Chriſtians*, but even the *Arians*, and *Amelius* the *Platoniſt*, who was a more indifferent judge than either of them, did underſtand this Paſſage of St. *John*, without any thought of this Invention that he ſpake not of the *old*, but of the *new Creation* of the World by *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the Reformation of Mankind by the preaching of the *Goſpel*: Which I dare ſay no indifferent Reader of St. *John*, that had not been prepoſſeſs'd and byaſs'd by ſome violent prejudice, would ever have thought of.

And ſurely it ought to be very conſiderable in this Caſe, that the moſt ancient *Chriſtian* Writers, *Ignatius*, *Juſtin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, and even *Origen* himſelf who is called *the Father of Interpreters*, are moſt expreſs and poſitive in this matter. For *Ignatius* was the Scholar of *Polycarp*, who was a Diſciple of St. *John*; and *Juſtin Martyr* lived in the next Age to that of the *Apoſtles*; and *Origen* was a Man of infinite Learning and Reading, and in his *Comments* upon *Scripture* ſeems to have conſidered all the *Interpretations* of thoſe that were before him: So that if this, which *Socinus* is ſo confident is the true ſenſe of St. *John*, had been any where extant, he would not probably have omitted it; nay rather would certainly have mentioned it, if for no other reaſon, yet for the ſurpriſing novelty and ſtrangeneſs of it, with which he was apt to be over-much delighted.

So that if this Interpretation of *Socinus* be true, here are two things very wonderful, and almoſt incredible: *Firſt*, that thoſe who lived ſo very near St. *John*'s Time, and were moſt likely to know his meaning, as *Ignatius*, *Juſtin Martyr*, &c. ſhould ſo widely miſtake it: And then, that the whole *Chriſtian* World ſhould for ſo many Ages together be deceived in the ground and foundation of ſo important an *Article* of Faith, if it were true; or if it were not, ſhould be led into ſo groſs and dangerous an Error as this muſt needs be, if *Chriſt* had no real exiſtence before he was born into the World: And which would be neceſſarily conſequent upon this, that no Man did underſtand this *Paſſage* of St. *John* aright before *Socinus*. This very conſideration alone, if there were no other, were ſufficient to ſtagger any prudent Man's belief of this Interpretation.

And as to the *Novelty* of it, *Socinus* himſelf makes no difficulty to own it; nay he ſeems rather to rejoice and to applaud himſelf in it. Unhappy Man! that was ſo wedded to his own Opinion that no Objection, no Difficulty could divorce him from it.

And for this I refer my ſelf to his *Preface* to his Explication of this firſt *Chapter* of St. *John*'s *Goſpel*; where you ſhall find theſe words concerning the Paſſage now in Controverſie, *Quorum verus ſenſus omnium prorſus, qui quidem extarent, explanatores latuiſſe videtur*; *The true ſenſe of which words*, ſays he, *ſeems to have been hid from all the Expoſitors that ever were extant*: And upon thoſe words, *v.* 10. *He was in the World, and the World was made* *by him*, he hath this expreſſion, *quid autem hoc loco ſibi velit* Johannes, *à nemine quod ſciam adhuc rectè expoſitum fuit, but what St.* John *means in this place was never yet, that I know of, by any Man rightly explain'd:* And *Schlictingius* after him, with more confidence but much leſs decency, tells us, that concerning the meaning of thoſe expreſſions, *in the beginning*, and of thoſe which follow concerning the *Word*, the ancient *Interpreters* did *ab Apoſtoli mente delirare*, went *ſo far from the Apoſtle's meaning as if they had rav'd and been out of their wits:* Which is ſo extravagantly ſaid, and with ſo much contempt of thoſe great and venerable Names, who were the chief Propagaters of *Chriſtianity* in the World, and to whom all Ages do ſo juſtly pay a Reverence, that nothing can be ſaid in excuſe of him but only that it is not uſual with him to fall into ſuch raſh and rude expreſſions. But the Man was really pinch'd by ſo plain and preſſing a *Text*, and where Reaſon is weak and blunt, Paſſion muſt be whetted, the only weapon that is left when Reaſon fails: And I always take it for granted, that no Man is ever Angry with his Adverſary but for want of a better Argument to ſupport his Cauſe.

And yet to do right to the Writers on that ſide, I muſt own, that generally they are a Pattern of the fair way of diſputing, and of debating matters of Religion without heat and unſeemly reflections upon their Adverſaries, in the number of whom I did not expect that the Primitive *Fathers* of the *Chriſtian* Church would have been reckoned by them. They generally argue matters with that temper and gravity, and with that freedom from paſſion and tranſport which becomes a ſerious and weighty Argument: And for the moſt part they reaſon cloſely and clearly, with extraordinary guard and caution, with great dexterity and decency, and yet with ſmartneſs and ſubtilty enough; with a very gentle heat, and few hard words: Vertues to be praiſed where-ever they are found, yea even in an Enemy, and very worthy our imitation: In a word, they are the ſtrongeſt managers of a weak Cauſe and which is ill founded at the bottom, that perhaps ever yet medled with Controverſie: Inſomuch that ſome of the *Proteſtants* and the generality of the *Popiſh* Writers, and even of the *Jeſuits* themſelves, who pretend to all the Reaſon and Subtilty in the World, are in compariſon of *them* but mere *Scolds* and *Bunglers:* Upon the whole matter, they have but this one great defect, that they want a good Cauſe and Truth on their Side; which if they had, they have Reaſon, and Wit, and Temper enough to defend it.

But to return to the buſineſs. That which I urge them withal, and that from their own Confeſſion, is this, that this Interpretation of theirs is perfectly new, and unknown to the whole *Chriſtian* World before *Socinus*; and for that Reaſon, in my Opinion, not to be bragg'd of: Becauſe it is in effect to ſay that the *Chriſtian* Religion, in a point pretended on both Sides to be of the greateſt moment, was never rightly underſtood by any ſince the *Apoſtles* days, for *fifteen hundred* years together: And which makes the matter yet worſe, that the *Religion* which was particularly deſign'd to overthrow *Polytheiſm* and the belief of more Gods, hath, according to *them*, been ſo ill taught and underſtood by *Chriſtians* for ſo many Ages together, and almoſt from the very beginning of *Chriſtianity*, as does neceſſarily infer a Plurality of Gods: An inconvenience ſo great, as no Cauſe, how plauſible ſoever it may otherwiſe appear, is able to ſtand under and to ſuſtain the weight of it.

For this the *Socinians* object to us at every turn, as the unavoidable conſequence of our Interpretation of this Paſſage of St. *John*, and of all other

Texts of *Scripture* produced by us to the ſame purpoſe, notwithſtanding that this Interpretation hath obtain'd in the *Chriſtian* Church for ſo many Ages: Now whoſoever can believe that the *Chriſtian* Religion hath done the Work for which it was principally deſign'd ſo ineffectually, muſt have very little reverence for it, nay, it muſt be a marvellous civility in him if he believe it at all. All that can be ſaid in this Caſe is, that it pleaſes God many times to permit Men to hold very inconſiſtent things, and which do in truth, though they themſelves diſcern it not, moſt effectually overthrow one another.

Secondly, Another mighty prejudice againſt this Interpretation is this, that according to this rate of liberty in interpreting *Scripture*, it will ſignifie very little or nothing, when any Perſon or Party is concerned to oppoſe any Doctrine contained in it; and the plaineſt *Texts* for any *Article* of Faith, how fundamental and neceſſary ſoever, may by the ſame arts and ways of Interpretation be eluded and render'd utterly ineffectual for the eſtabliſhing of it: For example, If any Man had a mind to call in queſtion that *Article* of the *Creed* concerning the *Creation of the World*, why might he not, according to *Socinus* his way of Interpreting St. *John*, underſtand the *firſt* Chapter of *Geneſis* concerning the *beginning* of the *Moſaical* Diſpenſation, and Interpret the *Creation of the Heaven and the Earth* to be the Inſtitution of the *Jewiſh* Polity and Religion, as by the *new Heavens* and the *new Earth* they pretend is to be underſtood the new State of things under the *Goſpel*? And why may not the *Chaos* ſignifie that ſtate of Darkneſs and Ignorance in which the World was before the giving of the Law by *Moſes*? And ſo on; as a very learned *Divine* of our own hath ingeniouſly ſhewn more at large.

Dr. *Stillingfleet*, now Biſhop of *Worceſter*.

There is no end of Wit and Fancy, which can turn any thing any way, and can make whatever they pleaſe to be the meaning of any *Book*, though never ſo contrary to the plain deſign of it, and to that ſenſe which at the firſt hearing and reading of it is obvious to every Man of common ſenſe.

And this, in my Opinion, *Socinus* hath done in the Caſe now before us, by impoſing a new and odd and violent ſenſe upon this Paſſage of St. *John*, directly contrary to what any Man would imagine to be the plain and obvious meaning of it, and contrary likewiſe to the ſenſe of the *Chriſtian* Church in all Ages down to his Time; who yet had as great or greater advantages of underſtanding St. *John* aright, and as much Integrity as any Man can now modeſtly pretend to: And all this only to ſerve and ſupport an *Opinion* which he had entertain'd before, and therefore was reſolv'd one way or other to bring the *Scripture* to comply with it: And if he could not have done it, it is greatly to be feared that he would at laſt have called in queſtion the Divine Authority of St. *John*'s Goſpel rather than have quitted his *Opinion*.

And to ſpeak freely, I muſt needs ſay that it ſeems to me a much fairer way to reject the Divine Authority of a *Book*, than to uſe it ſo diſingenuouſly, and to wreſt the plain expreſſions of it with ſo much ſtraining and violence from their moſt natural and obvious ſenſe: For no Doctrine whatſoever can have any certain foundation in any *Book*, if this liberty be once admitted, without regard to the plain Scope and Occaſion of it to play upon the words and phraſes with all the arts of *Criticiſm* and with all the variety of *Allegory* which a brisk and lively Imagination can deviſe: which I am ſo far from admiring in the expounding of the Holy *Scriptures*, that I am always jealous of an over-labour'd and far-fetch'd Interpretation of any *Author* whatſoever.

I do readily grant, that the *Socinian* Writers have managed the Cauſe of the *Reformation* againſt the Innovations and Corruptions of the Church of *Rome* both in Doctrine and Practice, with great accuteneſs and advantage in many reſpects: But I am ſorry to have cauſe to ſay, that they have likewiſe put into *their* hands better and ſharper weapons than ever they had before for the weakning and undermining of the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, which *Socinus* indeed hath in the general ſtrongly aſſerted, had he not by a dangerous liberty of impoſing a foreign and forc'd ſenſe upon *particular* Texts brought the *whole* into uncertainty.

Thirdly, Which is as conſiderable a prejudice againſt this new Interpretation of this Paſſage of St. *John* as either of the former, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, that this *Point*, of the exiſtence of the *Word* before his *Incarnation*, does not rely only upon this ſingle *Paſſage* of St. *John*, but is likewiſe confirmed by many other *Texts* of the *New Teſtament* conſpiring in the ſame ſenſe and utterly incapable of the Interpretation which *Socinus* gives of it.

I find he would be glad to have it taken for granted that this is the only *Text* in the *New Teſtament* to this purpoſe: And therefore he ſays very cunningly, that this Doctrine of the exiſtence of the Son of God before his Incarnation is too great a Doctrine to be eſtabliſh'd upon one ſingle *Text*: And this is ſomething, if it were true, that there is no other *Text* in the *New Teſtament* that does plainly deliver the ſame ſenſe: And yet this were not ſufficient to bring in queſtion the Doctrine deliver'd in this *Paſſage* of St. *John*.

That *God is a Spirit* will I hope be acknowledged to be a very weighty and fundamental Point of Religion, and yet I am very much miſtaken if there be any more than one *Text* in the whole *Bible* that ſays ſo, and that *Text* is only in St. *John*'s Goſpel. I know it may be ſaid, that from the light of natural Reaſon it may be ſufficiently prov'd that God is a Spirit: But ſurely *Socinus* of all Men, cannot ſay this with a good grace; becauſe he denies that the exiſtence of a God can be known by natural light without Divine Revelation: And if it cannot be known by natural light that there is a God; much leſs can it be known by natural light what God is, whether a Spirit or a Body.

And yet after all it is very far from being true that there is but one *Text* to this purpoſe; which yet he thought fit to inſinuate by way of excuſe for the novelty and boldneſs of his Interpretation; of which any one that reads him may ſee that he was ſufficiently conſcious to himſelf, and therefore was ſo wiſe as to endeavour by this ſly inſinuation to provide and lay in againſt it. I have likewiſe another reaſon which very much inclines me to believe that *Socinus* was the firſt Author of this Interpretation, becauſe it ſeems to me next to impoſſible, that a Man, of ſo good an Underſtanding as he was, could ever have been ſo fond of ſo ill-favour'd a Child if it had not been his own. And yet I do not at all wonder that his Followers came in to it ſo readily, ſince they had him in ſo great a veneration, it being natural to all *Sects* to admire their *Maſter*; beſides that I doubt not but they were very glad to have ſo great an Authority as they thought him to be, to vouch for an Interpretation which was ſo ſeaſonably deviſ'd for the relief of their Cauſe, in ſo much danger to be overthrown by a *Text* that was ſo plain and full againſt them.

And how little ground there is for this Inſinuation, that this is the only *Text* in the *New Teſtament* to this purpoſe, I ſhall now ſhew from a multitude of other *Texts* to the ſame ſenſe and purpoſe with this *Paſſage* of St. *John*. And I ſhall rank them under *two* Heads.

Firſt, Thoſe which expreſly aſſert the Son of God to have been, and to have been in Heaven with God, and partaker with him in his Glory, before his *Incarnation* and appearance in the World.

Secondly, Thoſe which affirm that the World and all Creatures whatſoever were made by him.

I. Thoſe *Texts* which expreſly aſſert *the Son of God to have been, and to have been in Heaven with God, and partaker with him in his Glory, before his Incarnation and appearance in the World.*

John 3.13. *No Man hath aſcended into Heaven, but he that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven:* Where the *Son* is ſaid to have *come down from Heaven*, in reſpect of the Union of his Divinity with human Nature and his ſpecial reſidence in it here below: And yet he is ſaid to have *come down from Heaven* as ſtill *to be in Heaven*: *He that came down from Heaven, the Son of Man who is in Heaven*, that is, in reſpect of his Divinity by which he is every-where preſent: *And he that came down from Heaven* is here called *the Son of Man*, by the ſame Figure that his *Blood* is elſewhere called *the Blood of God*, the *Apoſtle* aſcribing that to one Nature which is proper to the other: this we take to be the moſt natural and eaſie ſenſe of this *Text*, and moſt agreeable to the tenour of the *New Teſtament*. Acts 20. 28.

John 6.62. Again, *What and if ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man aſcend up where he was before?* So that if he really *aſcended up into Heaven* after his Reſurrection, he *was* really *there* before his Incarnation.

John 8.58. *Before Abraham was*, ſays our *B. Saviour*, *I am*; the obvious ſenſe of which words is, that *he* had a real exiſtence before *Abraham* was actually in Being.

John 13.3. Again it is ſaid, that *Jeſus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God*, &c.

Joh. 16.27; And again; *For the Father himſelf loveth you, becauſe ye loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World; again, I leave the World, and go to the Father:* This was ſo very plain, that his *Diſciples* who were ſlow enough of apprehenſion in other things, did underſtand this ſo well that upon this declaration of his they were convinc'd of his *Omniſcience*, which is an *incommunicable Property* of the *Divinity*: For ſo it immediately follows, *His Diſciples ſaid unto him, Lord, now ſpeakeſt thou plainly and ſpeakeſt no Parable: Now are we ſure that thou knoweſt all things, and needeſt not that any man ſhould ask thee: By this we believe that thou cameſt forth from God.* So that either this which I have all along declar'd muſt be the meaning of our *Saviour*'s words, or elſe his *Diſciples* were groſly miſtaken and did not underſtand him at all: And if ſo, then ſurely our *Saviour* before he had proceeded any further would have corrected their miſtake and have ſet them right in this matter: But ſo far is he from doing that, that he allows them to have underſtood him aright: For thus it follows, *Jeſus anſwered them, Do ye now believe?* as if he had ſaid, I am glad that you are at laſt convinc'd and do believe that *I came from God*, and muſt *return to him*; and that *I know all things*, which none but God can do. Is it now poſſible for any Man to read this *Paſſage* and yet not to be convinced that the *Diſciples* underſtood our *Saviour* to ſpeak literally? But if his meaning was as the *Socinians* would make us believe, then the *Diſciples* did perfectly miſtake his words; the contrary whereof is I think very plain and evident beyond all contradiction. v. 28. v. 29, 30. v. 31.

John 17. 5. Again, *And now, O Father, glorifie me with thine own ſelf, with the glory which I had with thee, before the World was:* This ſurely is not ſpoken of his *being with God* after his Incarnation, and before his entrance upon his publick Miniſtry: They have not, I think, the face to underſtand this expreſſion, *before the World was*, of the new Creation, but do endeavour to avoid it another way, which I ſhall conſider by and by.

v. 8. And a little after, *I have given them the words which thou gaveſt me, and they have received them, and known aſſuredly that that I came from thee, and that thou didſt ſend me.*

1 Joh. 1. 1, 2. Again, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life: for the life was manifeſted, and we have ſeen it, and bear witneſs, and ſhew unto you that eternal Life*, for ſo he calls *the Son of God, which was with the Father, and was manifeſted unto us.*

Phil. 2. 5, 6, 7, 8. And that he was not only *with God* before he aſſumed human Nature, but alſo was really God, St. *Paul* tells us: *Let this mind be in you, which was alſo in Chriſt Jeſus, who being in the form of God* οὐχ᾽ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο, *did not arrogate to himſelf to be equal with God*, that is, he made no oſtentation of his Divinity: For this I take to be the true meaning of that *Phraſe*, both becauſe it is ſo uſed by *Plutarch*, and becauſe it makes the ſenſe much more eaſie and current, thus, *who being in the form of God, did not aſſume an equality with God*, that is, he did not appear in the Glory of his Divinity, which was hid under a Veil of human fleſh and infirmity; *But he emptied himſelf, and took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men; and being found in faſhion as a man*, or in the habit of a Man, *he became obedient to the death*, &c. So that if *his being made in the likeneſs and faſhion of a man* does ſignifie that he was really Man by his Incarnation, then ſurely his *being in the form of God* when he took upon him *the faſhion and likeneſs of Man* and *the form of a Servant* or Slave, muſt in all reaſon ſignifie that he was really *God* before he became *Man:* For which reaſon the ſame *Apoſtle* did not doubt to ſay, that *God was manifeſted in the fleſh.* 1 Tim. 3. 16.

And now I hope that I have made it fully appear, that the beginning of St. *John's* Goſpel is not the ſingle and only *Text* upon which we ground this *great Doctrine* as *Socinus* calls it, and as we really eſteem it to be: For you ſee that I have produced a great many more; to avoid the dint and force whereof the *Socinians* do chiefly make uſe of theſe *two* Anſwers.

Firſt, To thoſe *Texts* which ſay that *he was in Heaven* and *came down from Heaven*, they give this anſwer; That our *Saviour* ſome time before his entrance upon his publick Miniſtry, they cannot agree preciſely *when*, was taken up into Heaven, and then and there had the Will of God reveal'd to him, and was ſent down from Heaven again to make it known to the World.

This is ſo very arbitrary and precarious a Suppoſition that I muſt confeſs my ſelf not a little out of countenance for them, that Men of ſo much Wit and Reaſon ſhould ever be put to ſo ſorry and pitiful a ſhift. For can any Man imagine, that in ſo exact a Hiſtory of our *Saviour's* Life, written by ſeveral Perſons, the Relation of ſo important a matter as this, and of the circumſtances of it, ſhould be wholly omitted? That we ſhould have a particular account of his being carried into *Egypt* in his infancy, and of the time when he was brought back from thence: Of his diſputing in the Temple with the *Jewiſh* Doctors, and putting them to ſilence, when he was but twelve years of Age: A punctual Relation of his being baptized by *John*; and how after that *he was led by the Spirit into the Wilderneſs to be tempted of the*

the Devil, and was carried by that *evil Spirit* from one place to another: But not one word of his being taken up by God into Heaven, and of his coming down again from thence; not the leaſt intimation given either of the time or any other circumſtance of ſo memorable a thing, upon which, according to the *Socinians*, the Authority of his Miſſion and the Divinity of his Doctrine did ſo much depend: When ſo many things of ſo much leſs moment are ſo minutely and exactly reported, what can be the reaſon of this deep ſilence in all the *Evangeliſts* concerning this matter? But above all, it is to be wondred that St. *John*, who wrote his *Goſpel* laſt, and as *Euſebius* tells us on purpoſe to ſupply the omiſſions of the other *Evangeliſts*, ſhould give no account of this thing, and yet, as the *Socinians* ſuppoſe, ſhould ſo often take it for granted and refer to it; as when it is ſaid that *he came forth from God*, and was *ſent from God*, and *came down* from Heaven, beſides ſeveral other Expreſſions to this purpoſe.

Who can believe this? And can it then be reaſonable to ſuppoſe ſuch a thing? And this without any ground from the Hiſtory of the *Goſpel*, only to ſerve an *Hypotheſis* which they had taken up, and which they cannot maintain, unleſs they may have leave to make a Suppoſition for which they have nothing in truth to ſay, but only that it is neceſſary to defend an Opinion which they are reſolv'd not to part with upon any terms.

This is ſo inartificial, not to ſay abſurd a way of avoiding a difficulty, to take for granted whatever is neceſſary to that purpoſe, that no Man of common ingenuity would make uſe of it: And there is no ſurer ſign that a Cauſe is greatly diſtreſs'd than to be driven to ſuch a ſhift. For do but give a Man leave to ſuppoſe what he pleaſes and he may prove what he will, and avoid any difficulty whatever that can be objected to him.

Beſides, that according to this device the Son of God did not firſt come from Heaven into the World, as the *Scripture* ſeems every where to ſay; but firſt was in the World, and then went to Heaven, and from thence came back into the World again: And he was not *in the beginning with God*, but was firſt in the World and afterwards with God; whereas St. *John* ſays, that the *Word was in the beginning*, and then *was made fleſh and dwelt among us*: But they ſay, that he firſt *was made fleſh*, and then a great while after was *in the beginning with God*: A ſuppoſition which is quite contrary to all the *Texts* which I have mentioned.

Nor do the ſeveral parts of this Interpretation of theirs agree very well together. *In the beginning*, that is, ſay they, when the *Goſpel* firſt began to be publiſh'd, *was the Word*; and then, that is, *in the beginning*, *he was with God*, that is, in Heaven to receive from God that Doctrine which he was to deliver to the World: But if by *the beginning* be meant the firſt publication of the *Goſpel*, he was not *then* with God, but had been with him and was come back from him before he entred upon his publick Miniſtry, which they make to be the meaning of *the beginning*: And *in the beginning he was God*, that is, ſay they, not God by Nature but by Office and Divine Conſtitution: And yet in this again they fall foul upon themſelves, for they ſay he was not declared to be God till after his Reſurrection and his being advanced to the right hand of God: So that he was not God in their ſenſe of *the beginning*, that is, when he entred upon his publick Miniſtry and began to preach the *Goſpel*.

Secondly, As to ſome other *Texts* which ſpeak of his exiſtence before his Incarnation, as that he was *glorified with his Father before the World was*, and *before Abraham was, I am*: Theſe they interpret thus, that *he was glorified with his Father before the World was*, and that he was before *Abraham was*,

was, *viz.* in the Divine foreknowledge and Decree: But then ſurely they do not conſider that this is nothing but what might have been ſaid of any other Man and even of *Abraham* himſelf, that *before he was*, that is, before he had a real and actual exiſtence, he was in the Purpoſe and Decree of God, that is, before he was, God did intend he ſhould be: Which is a ſenſe ſo very flat, that I can hardly abſtain from ſaying it is ridiculous. For certainly our *Saviour* did intend by ſaying this of himſelf to give himſelf ſome preference and advantage above *Abraham*, which this Senſe and Interpretation does not in the leaſt do: Becauſe of any other Man, as well as of our *B. Saviour*, it may as truly be ſaid, that he was in the Foreknowledge and Decree of God before *Abraham* was born.

And I cannot but obſerve further, that our *Saviour* does not ſay, before *Abraham* was, I was; but *before Abraham was*, I AM: Which is the proper *Name* of God, whereby is ſignified the eternal duration and permanency of his Being; In which ſenſe he is ſaid by the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* to be *the* Heb. 13. 8. *ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever*; And ſo likewiſe he deſcribes himſelf in St. *John*'s Viſion, *I am α and ω, the beginning and the ending, ſaith the* Rev. 1. 8. *Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty:* And that this is ſpoken of the *Son* you may ſee in the ſame *Chapter*, where he ſays of himſelf, *I am the firſt and the laſt:* And ſo likewiſe he deſcribes himſelf a- v. 17. gain, *I am α and ω, the beginning and the end, the firſt and the laſt:* And Rev. 22. 13. that we may not doubt who it is that thus deſcribes his own *Eternity*, he continuing ſtill to ſpeak in the ſame Perſon ſays, *I Jeſus have ſent mine* v. 16. *Angel*, &c. After this I ſhall only obſerve, that all theſe Expreſſions are the common Deſcription which the Scripture gives of the Eternity of God, whoſe Being is commenſurate to all the ſeveral reſpects of *Duration, paſt, preſent,* and *to come:* Beſides that the Attribute of *Almighty* is alſo a part of this Deſcription, which is ſo peculiar a Property of God, I mean of *Him* who is *God by Nature*, that the *Scripture* never gives it to any other.

II. I ſhall in the next place produce thoſe *Texts* which do expreſly affirm *that the World and all Creatures whatſoever were made by him:* And this will not only infer his Exiſtence before his Incarnation, but from all Eternity.

And for this, beſides this *Paſſage* of St. *John*, we have the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* moſt expreſs, who ſays, that *by him God made the Worlds:* And Heb. 1. 2. St. *Paul* likewiſe ſays the ſame more fully and particularly, calling *Jeſus* Coloſſ. 1. *Chriſt*, who was the *Son of God, the firſt-born of every Creature*, that is, as I 15, 16. have ſhewn in my former Diſcourſe, the *Heir* and *Lord of the whole Creation: For by him*, ſays he, *were all things created, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, viſible and inviſible; Whether they be Thrones or Dominions, Principalities or Powers*, for ſo he calls the ſeveral *Orders* of *Angels: all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things:* Or, as he is deſcribed in St. *John*'s Viſion, he *is the beginning of the Creation of God*, that is, the *Principle* and *Efficient Cauſe of the Creation*; or elſe, he was when all things began to be made, and therefore muſt be before any thing was created; and for that reaſon could not be a Creature himſelf; and conſequently, muſt of neceſſity have been from all Eternity.

Now theſe *Texts* muſt neceſſarily be underſtood of the *old Creation* and of the *natural* World, and not of the *moral* World, and the *Renovation* and Reformation of the Minds and Manners of Men by the *Goſpel*: For *that* was only the World here below which was reform'd by him, and not *things in*

Heaven; not the *inviſible* World, not the ſeveral Orders of *good Angels, which kept their firſt ſtation*, and have no need to be reform'd and made anew: Nor the *Devil* and his *evil Angels*; for though ſince the preaching of the *Goſpel* they have been under greater reſtraint and kept more within bounds, yet we have no reaſon to think that they are at all reform'd, but are *Devils* ſtill, and have the ſame malice and mind to do all the miſchief to Mankind that God will ſuffer them to do.

So that theſe *Texts* ſeem, at firſt view, to be very plain and preſſing of themſelves, but they appear to be much more convincing when we conſider the groundleſs Interpretations whereby they endeavour to evade the dint and force of them. For can any Man that ſeriouſly attends to the perpetual Style and Phraſe of the *New Teſtament*, and to the plain ſcope and drift of the *Apoſtle*'s reaſoning in theſe *Texts*, be induc'd to believe that when St. *Paul* tells us, that *all things were created by him, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, viſible and inviſible; whether they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers:* I ſay, can any Man of good ſenſe perſuade himſelf that by all this the *Apoſtle* means no more than the *moral Renovation* of the *World here below*, and the Reformation of Mankind by *Jeſus Chriſt*, and his *Goſpel* which was preach'd unto them?

But there is yet one *Text* more to this purpoſe, which I have reſerv'd to the laſt place; becauſe I find *Schlictingius* and *Crellius*, in their joint *Comment* upon it, to be put to their laſt ſhifts to avoid the force of it. It is in the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, at the beginning of it; where the *Apoſtle* thus deſcribes the *Son of God*; *God*, ſays he, *hath in theſe laſt days ſpoken to us by his Son, whom he hath conſtituted heir of all things, by whom alſo he made the Worlds*: From whence he argues the excellency of the *Goſpel* above the *Law*: For the *Law* was given by *Angels*, but the *Goſpel* by the *Son of God*; whoſe preheminence above the *Angels* he ſhews at large in the two *firſt Chapters* of this *Epiſtle*. Heb. 1. 2.

And to this end he proves the *two* parts of the Deſcription which had been given of him; namely, that God had *conſtituted him heir of all things*, and that *by Him he made the Worlds*. v. 2.

Firſt, That God had *conſtituted him heir of all things*, which is no-where ſaid of the *Angels*: But of *him* it is ſaid that was *made ſo much better than the Angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent Name than they*. The *Angels* are only called God's *Miniſters*, for which the *Apoſtle* cites the words of the *Pſalmiſt*; but to *Chriſt* he gives the Title of *his Son*, and *his firſt-begotten*, by vertue whereof he is *heir of all things*: *For to which of the Angels ſaid he at any time, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* And this I will agree with them to be ſpoken of *Chriſt* with reſpect to his Reſurrection, by which, as St. *Paul* tells us, he was *powerfully declared to be the Son of God*. This is the *firſt* Prerogative of *Chriſt* above the *Angels*: But there is a far greater yet behind; for he proves, v. 7. Pſ. 104. 4. v. 6. Rom. 1. 4.

Secondly, That he had not only the Title of *God* given him; but that he was *truly and really God*, becauſe *he made the World*. That the Title of *God* was given him he proves by a citation out of the *Pſalmiſt*, *But unto the Son he ſaith, Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, &c. And that he was *truly and really God* becauſe *he made the World*, he proves by a citation out of another *Pſalm*, where it is ſaid of him, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning haſt laid the foundations of the Earth, and the Heavens are the works of thy hands: They ſhall periſh*, &c. v. 8. Pſ. 45. 6, 7. v. 10, 11, 12.

Let us now ſee how *Schlictingius* and *Crellius* interpret this *Text* cited out of the *Pſalmiſt* by the *Apoſtle* as ſpoken of *Chriſt*. They ſay, * that *the Author* of this Epiſtle *could not have referr'd to Chriſt the former words* of this Citation, *which ſpeak of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, unleſs he had taken it for granted, that Chriſt is the moſt high God*; eſpecially *if they be underſtood, as they muſt neceſſarily be* by thoſe who take this for granted, *to be ſpoken in the firſt place and directly to*, or concerning, *Chriſt. For ſince all the words of the Pſalm are manifeſtly ſpoken of the moſt High God, but that Chriſt is that God is not ſignified, no not ſo much as by one word in that Pſalm, it is neceſſary, that if you will have theſe words to be directed to Chriſt, you muſt take it for granted that Chriſt is that moſt High God of whom the Pſalmiſt there ſpeaks.*

Now we will join iſſue with theſe *Interpreters* upon this *Conceſſion, viz.* that *the Author* of this *Epiſtle could not have referr'd theſe words, which ſpeak of the Creation of Heaven and Earth, to Chriſt, without taking it for granted, that Chriſt* is truly *that God* who made the World. And if the *Author* of this *Epiſtle* does affirm theſe words of the *Pſalmiſt* to be ſpoken of *Chriſt*, then they muſt acknowledge *Chriſt* to be the *true God who made Heaven and Earth:* But the *Author* of this *Epiſtle* does as evidently affirm theſe words to be ſpoken *to* or *of Chriſt*, as he does the words of any other *Text* cited in this *Chapter:* And for this I appeal to the common ſenſe of every Man that reads them.

Theſe Interpreters indeed are contented that the *latter* part of this *Citation* ſhould be ſpoken of *Chriſt*, but not the *former:* But why not the *former* as well as the latter? when they have ſo expreſly told us, that *all the words of this Pſalm are manifeſtly ſpoken of God.* What is the Myſtery of this? Could they not as eaſily have interpreted the *former part* which ſpeaks of the *Creation of Heaven and Earth*, concerning the *moral World*, and the *new Creation* or Reformation of Mankind by *Jeſus Chriſt* and his *Goſpel*, as well as ſo many other plain *Texts* to the ſame purpoſe? No doubt they could as well have done it, and have ſet as good a face upon it when they had done it. But why then did they not do it? it was for a Reaſon which they had no mind to tell, but yet it is not hard to be gueſſed at; *namely*, that if they had admitted the *former* words to have been ſpoken of *Chriſt*, they knew not what to do with the *latter* part of this *Citation*; *They ſhall periſh, but* v. 11, 12.
thou remaineſt; they ſhall wax old as a garment, and as a veſture ſhalt thou fold them up, and they ſhall be changed. What ſhall *periſh*, and *wax old*, and *be changed?* Why, the *Earth* and the *Heavens* which the *Son* had made; that is, the *moral World*, the Reformation of Mankind, and the *new Creation* of things by the Goſpel: All theſe muſt have undergone the ſame fate with the *natural World*, and muſt not only have been defaced, but utterly deſtroy'd and brought to nothing. This they would not ſay, but they did ſee it, though they would not ſeem to ſee it: And we may plainly ſee by this, that they can interpret a *Text* right when neceſſity forceth them to it, and they cannot without great inconvenience to their Cauſe avoid it: But when Men have once reſolv'd to hold faſt an Opinion they have taken up, it then becomes not only convenient but neceſſary to underſtand nothing that makes againſt it: And this is truly the preſent caſe. But in the mean time where is ingenuity and love of Truth?

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* Ne referre quidem hæc priora verba, de cœli terræq; creatione loquentia, ad Chriſtum potuiſſet Autor, niſi pro conceſſo ſumſiſſet Chriſtum eſſe ſummum illum Deum, cœli & terræ Creatorem; præſertim ſi ea, ut neceſſe foret primò & directè ad Chriſtum dicta eſſe cenſeas. Nam cum omnia Pſalmi verba manifeſtè de Deo loquuntur, Chriſtum autem Deum illum eſſe ne unico quidem verbo in toto hoc Pſalmo indicetur; neceſſe eſt ut ſi verba illa ad Chriſtum directa eſſe velis, pro conceſſo ſumas, Chriſtum eſſe Deum illum ſummum de quo in Pſalmo ſermo eſt.

And thus I have with all the clearneſs and brevity I could, ſearch'd to the very foundations of this new Interpretation of this *Paſſage* of the *Evangeliſt*, upon which the *Divinity* of the *Son of God* is ſo firmly eſtabliſh'd; and likewiſe of the groſs Miſinterpretations of ſeveral other *Texts* to the ſame purpoſe in this *Evangeliſt*, and in other *Books* of the *New Teſtament*: All which Interpretations I have endeavoured to ſhew to be not only contrary to the ſenſe of all *Antiquity*, of which, as *Socinus* had but little knowledge, ſo he ſeems to have made but little account; but to be alſo evidently contrary to the perpetual tenour and ſtyle of the *H. Scripture*.

Before I go off from this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing wherein our *Adverſaries* in this *Cauſe* do perpetually glory as a mighty advantage which they think they have over us in this *Point* of the *Divinity of the Son of God*, and conſequently, that other *Point of the B. Trinity*: *namely*, that they have Reaſon clearly on *their* Side in this *Controverſie*, and that the Difficulties and Abſurdities are much greater and plainer on *our* part than on *theirs*.

Here they are pleas'd to triumph without modeſty, and without meaſure: And yet notwithſtanding this, I am not afraid here likewiſe to join iſſue with them, and am contented to have this matter brought to a fair Trial at the Bar of *Reaſon*, as well as of *Scripture*, expounded by the general *Tradition* of the *Chriſtian* Church: I ſay, by general *Tradition*, which next to *Scripture* is the beſt and ſureſt confirmation of this great *Point* now in queſtion between us, and that which gives us the greateſt and trueſt light for the right underſtanding of the true ſenſe and meaning of *Scripture*, not only in *this*, but in moſt other important *Doctrines* of the *Chriſtian* Religion.

I am not without ſome *good hopes*, I will not ſay, *confidence*, for I never thought *that* to be ſo great an advantage to any Cauſe as ſome Men would be glad to make others believe it is, hoping to help and ſupport a weak Argument by a ſtrong and mighty Confidence: But ſurely Modeſty never hurt any *Cauſe*, and the *Confidence of Man* ſeems to me to be much like *the Wrath of Man*, which St. *James* tells us, *worketh not the righteouſneſs of God*; that is, it never does any good, it never ſerves any wiſe and real purpoſe of Religion: ch. 1. v. 20.

I ſay, I am not without ſome good hopes, that I have in the foregoing *Diſcourſes* clearly ſhewn, that the tenour of *Scripture* and *general Tradition* are on our Side in this *Argument*, and therefore I ſhall not need to give my ſelf the trouble to examine this matter over again.

Now as to the Point of *Reaſon*, the great *Difficulty* and *Abſurdity*, which they object to our *Doctrine* concerning this *Myſtery*, amounts to thus much, that it is not only above *Reaſon*, but plainly contrary to it.

As to its being above *Reaſon*, which they are loth to admit any thing to be; this I think will bear no great Diſpute: Becauſe, if they would be pleas'd to ſpeak out, they can mean no more by this, but that our *Reaſon* is not able fully to comprehend it: But what then? Are there no *Myſteries* in Religion? *That* I am ſure they will not ſay, becauſe God, whoſe infinite Nature and Perfections are the very Foundation of all Religion, is certainly the greateſt *Myſtery* of all other, and the moſt incomprehenſible: But *we* muſt not, nay *they* will not for this reaſon deny, that there is ſuch a Being as God. And therefore if there be *Myſteries* in Religion, it is no reaſonable Objection againſt them that we cannot fully comprehend them: Becauſe all *Myſteries* in what kind ſoever, whether in *Religion* or in *Nature*, ſo long, and ſo far as they are *Myſteries*, are for that very reaſon incomprehenſible.

But they urge the matter much further, that *this* particular *Myſtery* now under debate is plainly contrary to *Reaſon*: And if they can make this good, I will confeſs that they have gained a great Point upon us. But then they are to be put in mind, that to make this good againſt us they muſt clearly ſhew ſome plain *Contradiction* in this *Doctrine*, which I could never yet ſee done by any. Great *Difficulty* I acknowledge there is in the Explication of it, in which the further we go, beyond what God hath thought fit to reveal to us in *Scripture* concerning it, the more we are entangled, and that which Men are pleaſed to call an *explaining* of it, does in my apprehenſion often make it more obſcure; that is, leſs plain than it was before; which does not ſo very well agree with a pretence of *Explication*.

Here then I fix my foot: That there are *three* Differences in the *Deity*, which the *Scripture* ſpeaks of by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H Ghoſt*, and every where ſpeaks of them as we uſe to do of *three* diſtinct *Perſons*: And therefore I ſee no reaſon why in this Argument we ſhould nicely abſtain from uſing the word *Perſon*; though I remember that St. *Jerome* does ſomewhere deſire to be excuſed from it.

Now concerning theſe *Three* I might in the firſt place urge that plain and expreſs *Text*, *There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the H. Ghoſt; and theſe three are one*: But upon this I will not now inſiſt, becauſe it is pretended, that in ſome *Copies* of greateſt antiquity this *Verſe* is omitted; the contrary whereof is I think capable of being made out very clearly: But this matter would be too long to be debated at preſent. 1 Joh. 5. 7.

However that be, thus much is certain and cannot be denied, that our *Saviour* commanded his *Apoſtles* to *baptize all Nations in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt*: And that the *Apoſtles* in their *Epiſtles* do in their moſt uſual form of *Benediction* join theſe Three together: And it is yet further certain, that not only the Name and Title of *God*, but the moſt *incommunicable Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Deity*, are in *Scripture* frequently aſcribed to the *Son* and the *H. Ghoſt*; one *Property* only excepted, which is peculiar to the *Father* as he is the *Principle* and Fountain of the *Deity*, that he is of *himſelf* and of no other; which is not, nor can be ſaid of the *Son* and *H. Ghoſt*.

Now let any Man ſhew any plain and downright *Contradiction* in all this; or any other *Difficulty* beſides this, that the particular manner of the exiſtence of theſe three *Differences* or *Perſons* in the *Divine Nature*, expreſs'd in *Scripture* by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*, is *incomprehenſible* by our *finite* Underſtandings, and *inexplicable* by us: In which I do not ſee what Abſurdity there is, ſince our *Adverſaries* cannot deny that many things certainly are, the particular manner of whoſe exiſtence we can neither comprehend, nor explain.

Let us now ſee, whether the *Opinion* of our *Adverſaries* hath not greater *Difficulties* in it, and more palpable *Abſurdities* following from it. They ſay, that the *Son of God* is *a mere Creature*; not God *by Nature*, and yet truly and really God by *Office* and by Divine appointment and conſtitution; to whom the very ſame Honour and Worſhip is to be given which we give to *Him* who is God by *Nature*.

And can they diſcern no *Difficulty*, no *Abſurdity* in this? What? no *abſurdity* in bringing *Idolatry* by a *back-door* into the *Chriſtian* Religion, one main Deſign whereof was to baniſh Idolatry out of the World? And will they in good earneſt conteſt this matter with us, that the giving *Divine Worſhip* to *a mere Creature* is not *Idolatry*? And can they vindicate themſelves in this

Point any other way, than what will in a great meaſure acquit both the *Pagans* and the *Papiſts* from the charge of *Idolatry?*

What? no *Abſurdity* in a *God* as it were *but of yeſterday?* in a *Creature God*, in a God merely by *poſitive Inſtitution*; and this in oppoſition to a plain *moral Precept* of eternal obligation, and to the fix'd and immutable Nature and Reaſon of things?

So that to avoid the *ſhadow* and appearance of a *Plurality* of *Deities* they run *really* into it, and for any thing I can ſee, into downright Idolatry, by *worſhipping a Creature beſides the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever.* Rom. 1. 25.

They can by no means allow *two* Gods by *Nature*; no more can *we:* But they can willingly admit of *two* Gods; the *one* by *Nature*, and the *other* by *Office*, to whom they are content to pay the ſame *Honour* which is due to *Him* who is God by *Nature.* Provided *Chriſt* will be contented to be but a *Creature*, they will deal more liberally with him in another way than in Reaſon is fit.

And do they ſee no Abſurdity in all this? nothing that is contrary to *Reaſon* and *good ſenſe?* nothing that feels like *Inconſiſtency* and *Cantradiction?* Do they conſider how often God hath declar'd that *he will not give his glory to another?* And that the *Apoſtle* deſcribes *Idolatry* to be, the giving *ſervice*, or worſhip, to things *which by Nature are no Gods?* Gal. 4. 8.

Surely if *Reaſon* guided by *Divine Revelation* were to chuſe a God, it would make choice of one who is declared in *Scripture* to be *the only begotten of the Father, the firſt and the laſt, the beginning and the end, the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever:* much rather than a *mere Creature*, who did not begin to be till about *ſeventeen hundred* years ago.

I only propoſe theſe things, without any artificial aggravation, to *their* moſt ſerious and impartial conſideration; after which I cannot think that theſe great *Maſters* of *Reaſon* can think it ſo eaſie a matter to extricate themſelves out of theſe *Difficulties.* The *God of Truth* lead us into all Truth, and enlighten the Minds of thoſe who are in Error, and *give* them *Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth:* For *his* ſake who is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſaid upon this Argument, which I am ſenſible is mere Controverſie: A thing which I ſeldom meddle with, and do not delight to dwell upon. But my *Text*, which is ſo very proper for this *Seaſon* hath almoſt neceſſarily engaged me in it: Beſides, that I think it a *Point* of that concernment, that all *Chriſtians* ought to be well inſtructed in it. And I have choſen rather once for all to handle it fully and to go to the bottom of it, than in every *Sermon* to be flurting at it, without ſaying any thing to the purpoſe againſt it: A way which in my Opinion is neither proper to eſtabliſh Men in the Truth nor to convince them of their Error.

I ſhall only at preſent make this ſhort Reflection upon the whole: That we ought to treat the *Holy Scriptures* as the *Oracles of God*, with all reverence and ſubmiſſion of Mind to the Doctrine therein revealed: And to interpret them with that candour and ſimplicity which is due to the ſincere Declarations of God intended for the inſtruction and not for the deception and deluſion of Men: I ſay, we ſhould treat them as the *Oracles* of God, and not like the *doubtful Oracles* of the *Heathen Deities, that is*, in truth of the *Devil;* which were contrived and calculated on purpoſe to deceive, containing and for the moſt part intending a ſenſe directly contrary to the appearing and moſt obvious meaning of the Words: For the *Devil* was the firſt *Author* of *Equivocation*; though the *Jeſuits* have ſince made it a lawful way of lying, which *their Father*, of whom they learn'd it, had not credit and authority enough to do.

And it deſerves likewiſe to be very well conſidered by us; that nothing hath given a greater force to the Exceptions of the Church of *Rome* againſt the *H. Scriptures* being a ſufficient and certain Rule of Faith, than the uncertainty into which they have brought the plaineſt *Text* imaginable for the eſtabliſhing of Doctrines of greateſt moment in the *Chriſtian* Religion, by their remote and wreſted Interpretation of them: Which way of dealing with them ſeems to be really more contumelious to thoſe *H. Oracles*, than the downright rejecting of their Authority: Becauſe this is a fair and open way of attacquing them, whereas the other is an inſiduous, and therefore more dangerous way of undermining them.

But as for us who do in good earneſt believe the Divine Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, let us take all our Doctrines and Opinions from thoſe clear Fountains of Truth, not diſturb'd and darkned by ſearching anxiouſly into all the poſſible Senſes that the ſeveral words and expreſſions of *Scripture* can bear, and by forcing that ſenſe upon them which is moſt remote and unnatural, and in the mean time wilfully overlooking and paſſing by that ſenſe which is moſt obvious and eaſie to the common apprehenſion of any unbyaſs'd and impartial Reader. This is to uſe the *H. Scriptures* as the Church of *Rome* have done many Holy and good Men whom they are pleaſed to brand with the odious Name of *Hereticks*, to torture them till they ſpeak the Mind of their Tormentors though never ſo contrary to their own.

I will now conclude this whole Diſcourſe with a *Saying* which I heard from a great and judicious Man, *Non amo nimis argutam Theologiam; I love no Doctrines in Divinity which ſtand ſo very much upon quirck and ſubtilty.* And I cannot upon this occaſion forbear to ſay, that thoſe Doctrines of Religion and thoſe Interpretations of *Scripture* have ever been to me the moſt ſuſpected, which need abundance of Wit and a great many *Criticiſms* to make them out: And conſidering the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of Almighty God, I cannot poſſibly believe but that all things neceſſary to be believ'd and practis'd by *Chriſtians* in order to their eternal Salvation are plainly contain'd in the *H. Scriptures*: God ſurely hath not dealt ſo hardly with Mankind as to make any thing neceſſary to be believ'd or practis'd by us which he hath not made ſufficiently plain to the capacity of the unlearned as well as of the learned. God forbid that it ſhould be impoſſible for any Man to be ſaved and to get to Heaven without a great deal of Learning to direct and carry him thither, when the far greateſt part of Mankind have no learning at all. It was well ſaid by *Eraſmus*, *That it was never well with the Chriſtian World ſince it began to be a matter of ſo much Subtilty and Wit for a Man to be a true Chriſtian.*

SERMON XLV.

Concerning the Incarnation of CHRIST.

Preached in the
Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *December* 21. 1680.

JOHN I. 14.

The Word was made fleſh.

THE laſt Year about this Time, and upon the ſame Occaſion of the Annual Commemoration of the *Incarnation* and *Nativity* of our *B. Lord and Saviour*, I began to diſcourſe to you upon theſe Words: In which I told you were contained *three* great Points concerning our *Saviour*, the Author and Founder of our *Religion*.

Firſt, His *Incarnation*, *the Word was made*, or became *fleſh*.

Secondly, His *Life* and Converſation here amongſt us; *and dwelt among us*, ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, *he pitched his Tabernacle among us*, he lived here below in this World, and for ſome time made his reſidence and abode with us.

Thirdly, That in this ſtate of his Humiliation he gave great and clear evidence of his Divinity: Whilſt he appear'd as a Man and lived amongſt us, there were great and glorious Teſtimonies given of Him, that he was the Son of God; and that in ſo peculiar a manner as no Creature can be ſaid to be: *And we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

I began with the firſt of theſe, namely, his *Incarnation*, *the Word was made fleſh*: For the full and clear explication of which words I propoſed to conſider theſe *two* things.

I. I. The *Perſon* here ſpoken of, and who it is that is here ſaid to be Incarnate, or made *fleſh*, namely, *the Word*. And this I have handled at large in my two former *Diſcourſes* upon this *Text*. I ſhall now proceed in the

II. II. *Second* place to give ſome account of the nature and manner of this *Incarnation*, ſo far as the *Scripture* hath thought fit to reveal and declare this Myſtery to us. *The Word was made fleſh*, that is, He who is perſonally called the *Word*, and whom the *Evangeliſt* hath ſo fully and clearly deſcribed in the beginning of his *Goſpel*, he *became fleſh*; that is, aſſumed our Nature and became *Man*; for ſo the word *fleſh* is frequently uſed in *Scripture*, for *Man* or Human Nature.

So that by the *Word's* becoming *fleſh*, that is, *Man*, the *Evangeliſt* did not only intend to expreſs to us that he aſſumed a human *Body* without a *Soul*, but that he became a *perfect Man*, conſiſting of *Soul* and Body united. It is very probable indeed that the *Evangeliſt* did purpoſely chuſe the word *fleſh*, which ſignifies the frail and mortal part of Humanity, to denote to us the great condeſcenſion of the *Son of God* in aſſuming our Nature with all its Infirmities, and becoming ſubject to frailty and mortality for our ſake.

Having thus explained the meaning of this *Propoſition*, the *Word was made* *fleſh*, I ſhall in a further proſecution of this Argument take into conſideration theſe *three* things.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider more diſtinctly what may reaſonably be ſuppos'd to be implied in this expreſſion of the *Word's being made fleſh.*

Secondly, I ſhall conſider the *Objections* which are commonly brought againſt this *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* from the ſeeming impoſſibility, or incongruity of the thing.

Thirdly, And becauſe, after all that can be ſaid in anſwer to thoſe *Objections*, it may ſtill appear to us very ſtrange that God who could without all this circumſtance, and condeſcention even almoſt beneath the Majeſty of the Great God, at leaſt as we are apt to think, have given Laws to Mankind, and have offer'd forgiveneſs of Sins and eternal life upon their Repentance for ſins paſt, and ſincere though imperfect obedience for the future; I ſay, it may ſeem ſtrange, that notwithſtanding this God ſhould yet make choice of this way and method of our Salvation: I ſhall therefore in the laſt place endeavour to give ſome probable account of this ſtrange and wonderful Diſpenſation, and ſhew that it was done in great condeſcention to the weakneſs and common prejudices of Mankind; and that when it is throughly conſider'd it will appear to be much more for our comfort and advantage than any other way which the wiſdom of this World would have been apt to deviſe and pitch upon. And in all this I ſhall all along take either the plain declarations of *Scripture*, or the pregnant intimations of it for my ground and guide.

I. I ſhall conſider more diſtinctly *what may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be implied in this expreſſion of the Word's being made fleſh*; namely, theſe *five* things.

Firſt, The *truth and reality of the thing:* That the Son of God did not only appear in the form of human fleſh, but did really aſſume it: *the Word was made fleſh*, as the *Evangeliſt* expreſly declares: For if this had been only a *Phantaſm* and *Apparition*, as ſome *Hereticks* of old did fancy, it would in all probability have been like the appearance of *Angels* mentioned in the *old Teſtament*, ſudden and of ſhort continuance, and would after a little while have vaniſh'd and diſappear'd. But *he dwelt among us*, and convers'd familiarly with us a long time, and for many years together; and the *Scripture* uſeth all the expreſſions which are proper to ſignify a real Man, and a real *Human Body*, and there were all the ſigns and evidences of reality that could be: For the *Word* is ſaid to be made *fleſh*, and Chriſt is ſaid to be *of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh*, and to be *made of a Woman*; and all this to ſhew that he was a real *Man*, and had a real and ſubſtantial *Body:* For he was born, and by degrees grew up to be a *Man*, and did perform all ſuch actions as are natural and proper to Men: He continued a great while in the World, and at laſt ſuffer'd and dy'd, and was laid in the Grave; He did not vaniſh and diſappear like a Phantaſm or Spirit, but he dy'd like other Men: And his Body was raiſed again out of the Grave; and after he was riſen, he converſed forty days upon Earth, and permitted his Body to be handled, and laſt of all was viſibly taken up into Heaven.

So that either we muſt grant Him to have had a real Body, or we have cauſe to doubt whether all Mankind be not mere Phantaſms and Apparitions: For greater evidence no Man can give that he is really clothed with and carries about him a true and ſubſtantial Body, than the *Son of God* did *in the days of his fleſh.* It is to me very wonderful upon what ground, or indeed to what end, the *Hereticks* of old, *Marcion* and others, did deny the reality of *Chriſt's* fleſh. Surely they had a great mind to be *Hereticks* who took up ſo ſenſleſs an *Opinion* for no reaſon, and to no purpoſe.

Secondly, Another thing implyed in the *Word's being made fleſh*, is, *that this was done peculiarly for the benefit and advantage of Men: The Word was made fleſh*, that is, became *Man*; for ſo I have ſhewn the word *fleſh* to be often uſed in *Scripture*. And this the *Author* of the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews* takes very ſpecial notice of as a great grace and favour of God to Mankind, that his *Son* appear'd in our Nature, and conſequently for our Salvation; as it is ſaid in the *Nicene* Creed, *who for us Men and for our Salvation came down* Heb. 2. 16. *from Heaven, and was incarnate*, &c. *For verily*, ſays the *Apoſtle*, *He took not on him the nature of Angels, but of the ſeed of Abraham*, οὐ γὰρ δήπου ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται, *he did not aſſume the Angelical Nature*, ſo our *Tranſlators* underſtood the phraſe; but the word alſo ſignifies *to take hold* of a thing which is falling, as well as to *aſſume* or *take on him: He did not take hold of the Angels* when they were falling, but ſuffered them to lapſe irrecoverably into miſery and ruine: but *he took hold* of Human Nature when it was falling, and particularly *of the Seed of Abraham*, and by *the Seed of Abraham*; that is, by *himſelf, in whom all the Nations of the Earth were bleſſed*, he brought Salvation firſt to the *Jews*, and then to the reſt of Mankind. The *Apoſtle* chuſes to derive this *Bleſſing* from *Abraham*, that ſo he might bring it nearer to the *Jews* to whom he wrote this *Epiſtle*, and might thereby more effectually recommend the *Goſpel* to them, and the *glad tidings* of that *great Salvation* in which they had ſo peculiar an intereſt.

And it is ſome confirmation of the Interpretation I have given of that expreſſion *he took not on him*, &c. that the *Evangeliſt* uſes the very ſame word for *taking hold* of one that was ready to ſink: For ſo it is ſaid of St. *Peter* Matth. 14. 31. when he was *ready to ſink*, that *Chriſt put forth his hand*, καὶ ἐπελάβετο, *and caught hold of him*, and ſaved him from drowning: And thus the *Son of God caught hold* of Mankind which was ready to ſink into eternal perdition: He *laid hold* of our Nature, or as it is expreſs'd in the ſame *Chapter*, *he took part of fleſh and blood*, that in our Nature he might be capable of effecting our Redemption and Deliverance.

But it is no where ſaid in *Scripture*, not the leaſt intimation given there, that the *Son of God* ever ſhew'd ſuch grace and favour to the Angels: But *the Word became fleſh*; that is, became *Man*: He did not aſſume the *Angelical* Nature, but was contented to be cloathed with the *Rags of Humanity* and *to be made in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh*, that is, *of ſinful Man*.

Thirdly, This expreſſion of *the Word's being made fleſh* may further imply his *aſſuming the infirmities, and ſubmitting to the miſeries of Human Nature*. This I collect from the word *fleſh*, by which the *Scripture* often uſeth to expreſs our frail and mortal Nature. The *Son of God* did not only condeſcend to be *made Man*, but alſo to become mortal and miſerable for our ſakes: He ſubmitted to all thoſe things which are accounted moſt grievous and calamitous to human nature: To hunger and want, to ſhame and contempt, to bitter pains and agonies, and to a moſt cruel and diſgraceful death: So that in this ſenſe alſo *he became fleſh*, not only by being cloathed with human nature, but by becoming liable to all the frailties and ſufferings of it; of which he had a greater ſhare than any of the Sons of Men ever had: for never was ſorrow like to his ſorrow, nor ſufferings like to his ſufferings, the weight and bitterneſs whereof was ſuch as to wring from him, the meekeſt and moſt patient endurer of ſufferings that ever was, that doleful complaint, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?*

Fourthly, In this expreſſion, *the Word was made Fleſh*, is likewiſe imply'd *the Union of the Divinity with Human Nature in one Perſon*. And this the *Text* expreſſeth in ſuch words as ſeem to ſignifie a moſt perfect, and intimate, and vital Union of the *Divine* and *human* Natures of *Chriſt* in one *Perſon: The Word was made*, or became, *fleſh:* Which what elſe can it ſignifie but one of theſe two things? Either that the eternal *Word* and *only begotten Son of God* was changed into a *Man*, which is not only impoſſible to be, but impious to imagin: Or elſe, that the *Son of God* did aſſume our Nature and became *Man* by his *Divinity*, being united to *human Nature* as the *Soul* is vitally united to the *Body*; without either being changed into it, or confounded with it, or ſwallowed up by it, as the *Eutychian Hereticks* fancied the *human Nature* of *Chriſt* to be ſwallowed up of his *Divinity:* Which had it been ſo, St. *John* had expreſſed himſelf very untowardly when he ſays, *The Word became fleſh*; for it had been quite contrary, and *fleſh had become the Word*, being changed into it, and ſwallowed up by it, and loſt in it.

The only thing then that we can reaſonably imagine to be the meaning of this expreſſion is this, that the *Son of God* aſſumed *our Nature*, and united himſelf with it, as our *Souls* are united with our *Bodies:* And as the *Soul* and *Body* united make one *Perſon*, and yet retain their diſtinct *Natures* and Properties; ſo may we conceive the *Divine* and *human* Natures in *Chriſt* to be united into one *Perſon:* And this without any change or confuſion of the two *Natures*.

I ſay, the *Divinity* united it ſelf with *human Nature:* For though *fleſh* be only mentioned in the *Text*, yet he did not *only* aſſume *a human Body*, which was the Hereſie of *Apollinaris* and his Followers, upon a miſtake of *this* and ſome other *Texts* of *Scripture*: but he aſſumed the *whole human Nature*; that is, a human *Soul* united to a real and natural *Body:* for ſo I have ſhewn the word *fleſh* to be frequently uſed in *Scripture*, not only for the *Body* but for the *whole Man*, by an uſual Figure of ſpeech: As on the other hand, *Soul* is frequently uſed for the *whole Man* or *Perſon:* So many *Souls* are ſaid to have gone down with *Jacob* into *Egypt*, that is, ſo many *Perſons*.

But this I need not inſiſt longer upon, our *Saviour* being ſo frequently in *Scripture*, and ſo expreſly ſaid to be a *Man*; which could with no propriety of ſpeech have been ſaid, had he only aſſumed a *human Body:* Nor could he have been ſaid to have been *made in all things like unto us*, *ſin only excepted*, had he only had a human *Body* but not a *Soul:* For then the meaning muſt have been, that he had been *made in all things like unto us*; that is, like to a *Man*, that only excepted which chiefly makes the *Man*; that is, the *Soul:* And the addition of thoſe words, *Sin only excepted*, had been no leſs ſtrange; becauſe a human *Body*, without a *Soul*, is neither capable of being ſaid to have Sin, or to be without it.

And this may ſuffice to have been ſpoken in general concerning that great *Myſtery* of the *Hypoſtatical*, as they that love hard words love to call it, or *Perſonal* Union of the *Divine* and *human Natures* in the *Perſon* of our *B. Saviour:* In the more particular explication whereof it is not ſafe for our ſhallow underſtandings to wade further than the *Scripture* goes before us, for fear we go out of our depth and loſe our ſelves in the profound inquiry into the deep things of God, which he has not thought fit in this preſent ſtate of darkneſs and imperfection to reveal more plainly and fully to us. It ought to be thought ſufficient, that the *Scripture* ſpeaking of the ſame *Perſon*, *Jeſus Chriſt* our *B. Saviour*, doth frequently and expreſly call him both *God* and *Man:* Which how it can be ſo eaſily conceived upon any other Suppoſition than that of the Union of the *Divine* and *human Natures* in one *Perſon*, I muſt confeſs that I am not able to comprehend.

Fifthly and laſtly, All this which I have ſhewn to be implyed in this *Propoſition*, *the Word was made fleſh*, does ſignifie to us the wonderful and amazing condeſcenſion and love of God to Mankind in ſending his *Son* into the World, and ſubmitting him to this way and method for our Salvation and recovery. *The Word was made fleſh:* What a ſtep is here made in order to the reconciling of Men to God? From *Heaven* to *Earth*; from the top of Glory and Majeſty to the loweſt gulf of meanneſs and miſery: The *Evangeliſt* ſeems here to uſe the word *fleſh*, which ſignifies the meaneſt and vileſt part of Humanity, to expreſs to us how low the *Son of God* was contented to ſtoop for the Redemption of *Man*. *The Word was made fleſh:* Two *terms*, at the greateſt diſtance from one another, are here brought together: The *Son of God* is here expreſſed to us by one of his higheſt and moſt glorious Titles, the *Word*, which imports both *Power* and *Wiſdom*; *Chriſt the Power of God, and the Wiſdom of God*, as the *Apoſtle* calls him: And *human Nature* is here deſcribed by its vileſt part, *fleſh*; which imports frailty and infirmity: *The Word became fleſh*, that is, ſubmitted to that from which it was at the greateſt diſtance: *He* who was the *Power of God, and the Wiſdom of God*, ſubmitted not only to be called, but really to become a frail and miſerable *Man*; not only to aſſume our Nature, but to put on all the Infirmities, and which is the greateſt of all, the *Mortality* of it. 1 Cor. 1. 24.

And this is the *great Myſtery of godlineſs*, that is, of the *Chriſtian Religion*, that *God* ſhould be *manifeſted in the fleſh*, and *become Man*, with a moſt gracious and merciful deſign to bring Man back again to God: That he ſhould become a miſerable and a *mortal* Man to ſave us from eternal *death*, and to make us partakers of everlaſting *life:* That the *Son of God* ſhould condeſcend to inhabit our vile Nature, to wear *Rags* and to become a *Beggar* for our ſakes; and all this not only to repair thoſe diſmal Ruins which Sin had made in it, and to reſtore us to our former eſtate; but to better and advance our condition, and by degrees, to bring us to a ſtate of much greater perfection and happineſs than that from which we fell.

And that *he* ſhould *become Man* on purpoſe that he might *dwell among us*, and converſe with us, and throughly inſtruct us in our Duty, and ſhew us the way to eternal life by his heavenly Doctrine, and as it were take us by the hand and lead us in that way by the perfect and familiar Example of a moſt blameleſs and holy life; ſhewing us how *God himſelf* thought fit to live in this World, when he was pleaſed to *become Man*.

That by converſing with us *in the likeneſs* and nature *of Man*, he might become a *human*, and in ſome ſort an equal and familiar, an imitable and encouraging Example of innocency and goodneſs, of meekneſs and humility, of patience and ſubmiſſion to the Will of God under the ſoreſt afflictions and ſufferings, and in a word, a moſt perfect Pattern of a Divine and Heavenly converſation upon Earth.

And that by this means we might for our greater encouragement in holineſs and vertue, ſee all that which the Law of God requires of us exemplified in our Nature, and really performed and practiſed by a *Man* like our ſelves.

And that likewiſe in our nature he might conquer and triumph over the *two* great Enemies of our Salvation, the *World* and the *Devil:* And by firſt ſuffering *Death*, and then overcoming it, and by reſcuing our nature from the power of it by his Reſurrection from the dead, he might *deliver us from the fear of Death*, and give us the glorious hopes of a bleſſed *Immortality:* For by aſſuming our frail and mortal Nature he became capable of ſuffering and of ſhedding his precious Blood for us, and by that means of purchaſing *forgiveneſs of ſins* and *eternal Redemption for us*.

And further yet, that by being ſubject to the Miſeries and Infirmities of Humanity, he might from his own Experience, the ſureſt and moſt ſenſible ſort of knowledge and inſtruction, learn to have a more compaſſionate ſenſe of our infirmities, and be more apt to commiſerate us in all our ſufferings and temptations, and more ready to *ſuccour* us labouring under them.

And finally, that as a Reward of his obedience and ſufferings in our Nature, he might in the ſame Nature be *exalted to the right hand of the Majeſty on high*, there to continue *for ever to make interceſſion for us.*

II. I ſhall in the next place conſider the *Objections* againſt the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God*, from the ſuppoſed *impoſſibility* and incongruity of the thing. I ſhall mention *three*, and endeavour in as few words as I can to give a clear and ſatisfactory *Anſwer* to them.

Firſt, It is objected, that the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* as I have explained it, neceſſarily ſuppoſing an Union of the *Divinity* with *human Nature* is, if not altogether *impoſſible*, yet a very unintelligible thing.

Now that there is no impoſſibility in the thing ſeems to be very evident from the Inſtance whereby I have endeavoured to illuſtrate it, of the Union between the *Soul* and the *Body* of Man, which we muſt acknowledge to be a thing poſſible, becauſe we are ſure that it is; and yet no Man can explain, either to himſelf or to any one elſe, the manner how it is, or can be conceived to be; but for all that we are certain, as we can be of any thing, that it is ſo.

And is it not every whit as poſſible for God, if he ſo pleaſe, to unite *himſelf* to *human Nature*, as it is for the *Soul* to be united to the *Body*? And that we are not able to conceive the manner how this is or can be done, ought not in reaſon to be any prejudice againſt the truth and certainty of the thing: This indeed may make it ſeem ſtrange to us, but by no means incredible: Becauſe we do moſt firmly believe a great many things to be, the manner of whoſe Being we do not at all comprehend. And therefore I take it for an undoubted *Principle* which no Man can gainſay, *That to aſſure us that a thing really is, it is not neceſſary for us to know the manner how it is, or can be:* It is ſufficient for us to know, that the thing is not impoſſible; and of *that* we have the very beſt *Demonſtration* that can be, if we be ſure that it is.

Secondly, Suppoſing this thing to be poſſible, and capable in any meaſure to be underſtood, which yet I have ſhewn not to be neceſſary to our firm belief of it: it is further *objected*, that it ſeems to be a thing very incongruous, and much beneath the Dignity of the *Son of God*, to be united to *human Nature*, and to ſubmit to ſo near an Allyance with that which is ſo very mean and deſpicable: Yea to be infinitely more below *Him*, than for the greateſt *Prince* in this World to match with the pooreſt and moſt contemptible Beggar.

But herein ſurely we meaſure God too much by our ſelves, and becauſe we *who are evil* have ſeldom ſo much goodneſs as to ſtoop beneath our ſelves for the benefit and good of others, we are apt to think that God hath not ſo much goodneſs neither: And becauſe our ill nature, and pride, and folly, as indeed all pride is folly, will not ſuffer us to do it, we preſently conclude, that it does not become God. But what *Pliny* ſaid to the Emperour *Trajan* concerning earthly Kings and Potentates, is much more true of the *Lord of Glory*, the great King of Heaven and Earth; *Cui nihil ad augendum faſtigium ſupereſt, hoc uno modo creſcere poteſt, ſi ſe ipſe ſubmittat, ſecurus magnitudinis* *ſuæ*; *He that is at the top, and can riſe no higher, hath yet this one way left to become greater, by ſtooping beneath himſelf*; which he may very ſafely do, *being ſecure of his own Greatneſs.* The lower any Being, be he never ſo high, condeſcends to do good, the glory of his Goodneſs ſhines ſo much the brighter. Men are many times too proud and ſtiff to bend, too perverſe and ill-natur'd to ſtoop beneath their own little Greatneſs for the good of others: But God, whoſe *ways are not as our ways*, and whoſe *thoughts* are as much above *our* low and narrow *thoughts as the Heavens are high above the Earth*, did not diſdain nor think it below him to become *Man* for the good of Mankind; and as much as the *Divinity* is capable of being ſo, to become miſerable to make us happy. We may be afraid, that if we humble our ſelves we ſhall be deſpis'd, that if we ſtoop others will get above us and trample upon us: But God, though he condeſcend never ſo low, is ſtill ſecure of his own Greatneſs, and that none can take it from him.

So that in truth, and according to right Reaſon, it was no real diminution or diſparagement to the *Son of God* to become *Man* for the Salvation of Mankind: But on the contrary, it was a moſt glorious Humility, and the greateſt Inſtance of the trueſt Goodneſs that ever was. And therefore the Heb. 5. 5. *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews*, when he ſays, that *Chriſt glorified not himſelf to be made an High Prieſt, but* was *appointed of God* to this *Office, as was Aaron*; does hereby ſeem to intimate, that it was a *glory* to the *Son of God to be made an High Prieſt* for the Sons of Men: For though it was a ſtrange condeſcention, yet was it likewiſe a moſt wonderful Argument of his Goodneſs, which is the higheſt Glory of the Divine Nature.

In ſhort, if God for our ſakes did ſubmit himſelf to a condition which we may think did leſs become him, here is great cauſe of thankfulneſs, but none ſurely of cavil and exception: We have infinite reaſon to acknowledge and admire his Goodneſs, but none at all to upbraid him with his kindneſs, and to quarrel with him for having deſcended ſo much beneath himſelf to teſtifie his love to us and his tender concernment for our happineſs: Beſides, that when we have ſaid all we can about this matter, I hope we will allow God himſelf to be the beſt and moſt competent Judge what is fit for God to do; and that he needs not to take counſel of any of his Creatures, what will Job 33. 12, 13. beſt become him in this or any other Caſe: *Behold in this thou art not juſt; I will anſwer thee, that God is greater than man: Why doſt thou diſpute againſt him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.*

Thirdly, If our Reaſon could get over this Difficulty, and admit that God might become *Man*; yet it ſeems very unſuitable to the *Son of God* and to his great Deſign of inſtructing and reforming Mankind, to appear in ſo low and ſuffering a condition. This, to the *Heathen Philoſophers*, who as the *Apoſtle* tells us, *by Wiſdom knew not God*, did not only ſeem unreaſonable 1 Cor. 1. 21. but even ridiculous: So St. *Paul* tells us, *We*, ſays he, *preach Chriſt crucified, to the Jews a ſtumbling-block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs*: To think that ſo poor and mean a Man was fit to give Laws to Mankind, and to awe the Minds of Men by the Authority of his Doctrine: That One who was put to Death himſelf ſhould be believed by others when he promiſed to them Life and Immortality in another World, could not but appear very ſtrange and unreaſonable.

For Anſwer to this, beſides other excellent Reaſons and Ends which the *Scripture* expreſly aſſigns of our *B. Saviour*'s Humiliation, in his aſſuming our Nature with the frailties and miſeries of it: As that he might be a *Teacher*, and an *Example* to us: That by his bitter Paſſion he might make Expiation for Sin, and ſet us a pattern of the greateſt meekneſs and patience under the greateſt provocations and ſufferings: That having ſuffered ſo grievouſly himſelf, he might know how to commiſerate and pity us in all our temptations and ſufferings: That *by death he might deſtroy him that had the power of Death; that is, the Devil; and might deliver thoſe who through fear of Death were all their Life-time ſubject to bondage:* I ſay, beſides all this, it was of great uſe that the great *Teacher* and *Reformer* of Mankind ſhould live in ſo mean and afflicted a condition, to confront the pride and vanity of the World by this conſideration that the Son of God, and the very beſt Man that ever was, was *a Beggar*, and *had not where to lay his head:* And likewiſe to convince Men of theſe *two* great *Truths*, *That God may grievouſly afflict thoſe whom he dearly loves;* and *That it is poſſible for Men to be innocent and contented in the midſt of poverty, and reproach, and ſufferings.*

Had our *B. Saviour* appeared in the *Perſon* and *Pomp* of a great *temporal Prince*, the influence of his Authority and Example would probably have made more Hypocrites and ſervile Converts, but not have perſuaded Men one jot more to be inwardly holy and good. The great Arguments that muſt do that, muſt not be fetch'd from the Pomp and Proſperity of this World, but from the great and eternal Recompences of the other.

And it is very well worth our obſervation, that nothing puzzled *Ceſar Vaninus*, who was perhaps the firſt, and the only *Martyr* for *Atheiſm* that ever was; I ſay, nothing puzzled him more, than that he could not from the Hiſtory of our *Saviour's* Life and Actions, written by the *Evangeliſts* with ſo native a ſimplicity, faſten upon him any probable imputation of a ſecular intereſt and deſign in any thing that he ſaid or did. No doubt but *Vaninus*, before he made this acknowledgment, had ſearched very narrowly into this matter; and could he have found any colour for ſuch an Imputation, he would have thought it ſufficient to have blaſted both Him and his Religion.

You may be pleaſed to conſider further, that it was the Opinion of the wiſeſt *Jews*, that the beſt Men, *the Children of God*, who called God *their Father*, were many times expoſed to the greateſt ſufferings and reproaches for the trial of their faith, and meekneſs, and patience, as we may ſee at large in the *Wiſdom of Solomon*, where ſpeaking of the malice and enmity of the wicked to one that was eminently righteous, he brings them in ſaying after this manner; *Let us lie in wait for the righteous, becauſe he is not for our turn; he is clean contrary to our doings: He upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our infamy the tranſgreſſions of our youth: He profeſſeth to have the knowledge of God, and he calleth himſelf the Child of the Lord: He is grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like other mens, his ways are of another faſhion: We are eſteemed of him as counterfeits, he abſtaineth from our ways as from filthineſs: He pronounceth the end of the juſt to be bleſſed, and maketh his boaſt that God is his Father: Let us ſee if his words be true, and what ſhall happen in the end of him: For if the juſt man be the Son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hands of his Enemies: Let us examine him with deſpitefulneſs and torture, that we may know his meekneſs and prove his patience: Let us condemn him to a ſhameful Death*, &c.

Chap. I. v. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20.

This is ſo exact a Character of our *B. Saviour*, both in reſpect of the holineſs and innocency of his Life, and of the reproaches and ſufferings which he met with from the wicked and malicious *Jews*, who perſecuted him all his life, and at laſt conſpir'd his death, that whoever reads this Paſſage can hardly forbear to think it a Prophetical Deſcripition of the innocency and ſufferings of the *B. Jeſus:* For *He* certainly in the moſt eminent manner was the *Son of God*, being called by the *Evangeliſt*, *the only begotten of the Father.*

Or if this was not a *Prediction* concerning our *B. Saviour*, yet thus much at leaſt may be concluded from it, that in the judgment of the *Wiſeſt* among the *Jews*, it was not unworthy of the Goodneſs and Wiſdom of the Divine Providence to permit the beſt Man to be ſo ill treated by wicked Men: And further, that in their judgment the innocency and vertues of an eminently righteous Man are then ſet off to the beſt advantage, and do ſhine forth with the greateſt luſtre, when he is under the hardeſt circumſtances of ſuffering and perſecution from an evil World.

Add to this likewiſe, that the beſt and wiſeſt of the *Heathen Philoſophers* do frequently inculcate ſuch Doctrines as theſe: That *Worldly Greatneſs and Power are not to be admired, but rather to be deſpis'd by a wiſe Man.* That *Men may be very good and dear to the Gods, and yet liable to the greateſt miſeries and ſufferings in this World.* That *whoever ſuffers unjuſtly, and bears it patiently, gives the greateſt teſtimony to Goodneſs, and does moſt effectually recommend Piety and Vertue, as things of greater value than the eaſe and pleaſure of this preſent Life:* Nay further, that *a good Man* caſt into the hardeſt circumſtances of poverty and miſery, of reproach and ſuffering, is the fitteſt perſon of all other to be the *Miniſter*, and *Apoſtle*, and *Preacher of God* to Mankind; Which are the very words of *Arian* a *Heathen Philoſopher*, in his *Diſcourſes of Epictetus.* Now ſurely they who ſay ſuch things have no reaſon to object to our *B. Saviour* his low and ſuffering condition, as misbecoming one that was to be the great *Teacher* and *Reformer* of the World.

And as to that part of the *Objection*, that He who ſo freely promiſed *Immortality* to others could not, or however did not ſave himſelf from *Death*: This vaniſheth into nothing when we conſider, that he reſcued himſelf from the power of the Grave: And it is ſo far from being *ridiculous* to rely upon his Promiſe of raiſing us up from the dead, that the Objection it ſelf is really *ſo.* For can any thing be more reaſonable than to rely upon Him for our hopes of Immortality, who by riſing from the Grave himſelf, and by conquering the Powers of Death and Darkneſs, and *triumphing openly* over them by his viſible Aſcenſion into Heaven, hath given ſo plain and ſenſible a Demonſtration to all Mankind that he is able to make good to the uttermoſt all the glorious Promiſes which he hath made to us of a bleſſed Reſurrection to eternal Life and Happineſs in another World? *To Him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever.* Amen.

SERMON XLVI.

Concerning the Incarnation of CHRIST.

Preached in the
Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *December* 28. 1680.

JOHN I. 14.

The Word was made fleſh, &c.

THE *third* and laſt thing which I propoſed upon this Argument of the *Incarnation* of the *Son of God* was, to give ſome account of this *Diſpenſation*, and to ſhew that the Wiſdom of God thought fit thus to order things, in great condeſcenſion to the weakneſs and common prejudices of Mankind: And that when all things are duely weigh'd and conſider'd, it will appear much more for our comfort and advantage, than any other way which the wiſdom of Men would have been moſt apt to deviſe and pitch upon. III.

And it is the more neceſſary to give ſome account of this matter, becauſe after all that hath hitherto been ſaid in anſwer to the Objections againſt it, it may ſtill ſeem very ſtrange to a conſidering Man, that God, who could without all this circumſtance and condeſcenſion have done the buſineſs for which his *Son* came into the World and appear'd in our Nature; that is, could have given the ſame Laws to Mankind, and have offer'd to us the forgiveneſs of our Sins and eternal Life upon our Repentance for Sins paſt, and a ſincere endeavour of Obedience for the future: I ſay, that notwithſtanding this, he ſhould yet make choice of this way for the Redemption and Recovery of fallen Man, by ſending his Son in our Nature, to accompliſh this Deſign.

And in the handling of this Argument I ſhall, as I ſaid before, all along take the expreſs declarations, or at leaſt the pregnant intimations of Scripture for my ground and guide: It being always ſafeſt to take the Reaſons of the Divine counſels and actions from God himſelf: And in the

Firſt place, I make no manner of doubt to ſay, that it would be a great preſumption and boldneſs in any Man to affirm, that the infinite Wiſdom of God could not have brought about the Salvation of Men by any other way, than by this very way in which he hath done it. For why ſhould we take upon us to ſet limits to infinite Wiſdom, and pretend to know the utmoſt extent of it? But ſince God hath been pleaſed to pitch upon this Way rather than any other, this ſurely ought to be reaſon enough to ſatisfie us of the peculiar wiſdom and fitneſs of it, whether the particular Reaſons of it appear to us or not.

And yet it cannot be denied to be a very noble Argument, and well worthy our conſideration, to enquire into the Reaſons of this diſpenſation, and to aſſign them particularly, if we can. For I look upon *Myſteries* and *Miracles* in Religion to be much of the ſame nature, and that a great Reverence is due to both where they are certain, and neceſſary in the Nature and Reaſon of the thing: but neither of them are eaſily to be admitted without neceſſity, and very good evidence.

Secondly, I conſider in the next place, that in the ſeveral Revelations which God hath made of himſelf to Mankind, he hath with great condeſcenſion accommodated himſelf, both as to manner and degree of them, to the condition and capacity, and other circumſtances of the Perſons and People to whom they were made.

Particularly we find that the Diſpenſation of God towards the *Jewiſh* Nation was full of condeſcenſion to the temper, and prejudices, and other circumſtances of that *People*. For the *Religion* and *Laws* which God gave them were far from being the beſt and moſt perfect in themſelves; in which ſenſe ſome underſtand that *Paſſage* in the Prophet *Ezekiel*, where it is ſaid, that God *gave* them *Statutes which were not good*; that is, very imperfect in compariſon of what he could and would have given them, had they been capable of them; and yet ſuch as were very well ſuited and fitted to their preſent capacity and circumſtances.

Thirdly, I obſerve yet further; That though the *Chriſtian* Religion, as to the main and ſubſtance of it, be a moſt perfect Inſtitution, being the *Law of Nature* reviv'd and perfected; yet upon a due conſideration of things it cannot be denied that the manner and circumſtances of this Diſpenſation are full of condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of Mankind and very much accommodated to the moſt common and deeply radicated Prejudices of Men concerning God and Religion; and peculiarly fitted to remove and root them out of the Minds of Men, by ſubſtituting ſomething in the place of them of as near a compliance with them as was conſiſtent with the Honour of Almighty God, and the great Deſign of the *Chriſtian* Religion.

It is not eaſie to give a certain account of the true *Original* of ſome *Notions* and *Prejudices* concerning *God* and *Religion* which have generally obtained in the World, in that variety of *Religions*, and the different ways of *Worſhip* and *Superſtition* which have been in ſeveral *Nations* of the Earth: But in *Hiſtory* and *Fact* this is certain, that ſome *Notions*, and thoſe very groſs and erroneous, did almoſt univerſally prevail even among thoſe who did extremely differ in the particular *Forms* and *Modes* of their *Superſtition*.

And though ſome of theſe were much more tolerable than others, yet God ſeems to have had great conſideration of ſome very weak and groſs apprehenſions of Mankind concerning *Religion*. And as in ſome of the *Laws* given by *Moſes*, God was pleaſed particularly to conſider the *hardneſs* of *the hearts* of that *People*; ſo he ſeems likewiſe to have very much ſuited the *Diſpenſation* of the *Goſpel* and the *Method* of our *Salvation*, by the *Incarnation* and *Sufferings* of his *Son*, to the common *Prejudices* of Mankind; eſpecially of the *Heathen* World, whoſe Minds were leſs prepared for this *Diſpenſation* than the *Jews*, if we conſider the Light and advantages which the *Jewiſh* Nation had above the *Gentile* World: That ſo by this Means and Method he might wean them by degrees from their groſs conceptions of things, and rectifie more eaſily their wrong apprehenſions by gratifying them in ſome meaſure, and in a gracious compliance with our weakneſs by bending and accommodating the *Way* and *Method* of our *Salvation* to our weak *Capacity* and imperfect *Conceptions* of things.

Fourthly, And that God hath done this in the *Diſpenſation* of the *Goſpel* will I think very plainly appear in the following Inſtances; in moſt of which I ſhall be very brief, and only inſiſt ſomewhat more largely upon the laſt of them.

1ſt. The World was much given to admire *Myſteries* in Religion. The *Jews* had *theirs*; ſeveral of which by God's own appointment were reſerv'd and kept ſecret in a great meaſure from the People; others were added by the Superſtition of after-Ages, and held in equal or rather greater Veneration than the former: And the *Heathen* likewiſe had *theirs*; the *Devil* always affecting to imitate God ſo far as ſerved his wicked and malicious deſign of ſeducing Mankind into *Idolatry* and the *Worſhip* of *himſelf*: And therefore the *Scripture* always ſpeaks of the *Heathen Idolatry* as the *Worſhip* of *Devils*, and not of *God*: So that almoſt every *Nation* had their peculiar and celebrated Myſteries; moſt of which were either very odd and phantaſtical, or very lewd and impure, or very inhuman and cruel, and every way unworthy of the *Deity*.

But the *great Myſtery of the Chriſtian Religion*, the *Incarnation of the Son of God*; or, as the *Apoſtle* calls it, *God manifeſted in the fleſh*; was ſuch a *Myſtery*, as for the greatneſs and wonderfulneſs, for the infinite mercy and condeſcenſion of it, did obſcure and ſwallow up all other *Myſteries*. For which reaſon the *Apoſtle*, in alluſion to the *Heathen Myſteries* and in contempt of them, ſpeaking of the great *Myſtery* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, ſays, *without controverſie great is the Myſtery of Godlineſs, God was manifeſted in the fleſh*, &c. 1 Tim. 3. 16. Since the World had ſuch an admiration for Myſteries, he inſtanceth in that which was a *Myſtery indeed*; a *Myſtery* beyond all diſpute, and beyond all compariſon.

2dly. There was likewiſe a great inclination in Mankind to the Worſhip of a *viſible* and *ſenſible Deity*: And this was a main Root and Source of the various *Idolatries* in the *Heathen* World. Now to take Men off from *this*, God was pleaſed to appear in our Nature; that they who were ſo fond of a *viſible Deity* might have one to whom they might pay *Divine Worſhip* without danger of *Idolatry*, and without injury to the *Divine Nature*: even a true and natural *Image* of God the *Father*, the *Fountain* of the *Deity*; or, as the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* deſcribes the *Son of God*, the reſplendency or *brightneſs of his* Father's *Glory, and the expreſs* Character or *Image of his Perſon*. Heb. 1. 3.

3dly. Another *Notion* which had generally obtained among Mankind, was concerning the *Expiation* of the Sins of Men, and appeaſing the offended *Deity* by *Sacrifice*, upon which they ſuppoſed the *puniſhment* due to the *Sinner* was transferred, to exempt him from it: Eſpecially by the *Sacrifices* of Men, which had almoſt univerſally prevailed in the *Gentile* World.

And this *Notion* of the *Expiation of Sin*, by *Sacrifices* of one kind or other, ſeems to have obtained very early in the World, and among all other ways of *Divine Worſhip* to have found the moſt univerſal reception in all Times and Places. And indeed a great part of the *Jewiſh* Religion and Worſhip was a plain Condeſcenſion to the general apprehenſions of Men concerning this way of appeaſing the *Deity* by *Sacrifice*: And the greateſt part of the *Pagan* Religion and Worſhip was likewiſe founded upon the ſame *Notion* and Opinion, which, becauſe it was ſo univerſal, ſeems to have had its *Original* from the *firſt Parents* of Mankind; either immediately after the *Creation*, or after the *Flood*; and from thence, I mean as to the ſubſtance of this *Notion*, to have been derived and propagated to all their *Poſterity*.

And with this general *Notion* of Mankind, whatever the ground and foundation of it might be, God was pleaſed ſo far to comply as once for all to have a general *Atonement* made for the *Sins* of all Mankind by the *Sacrifice* of his *only Son*, whom his wiſe Providence did *permit by wicked hands to be* *crucified and ſlain.* But I ſhall not at preſent inſiſt any further upon this; which requires a particular Diſcourſe by it ſelf, and may by God's aſſiſtance in due time have it.

4*thly*, Another very common *Notion* and very riſe in the *Heathen* World, and a great *Source* of their *Idolatry*, was their Apotheoſes or *Canonizing* of famous and eminent Perſons, who in their Life-time had done great things and ſome way or other been great *Benefactors* to Mankind, by advancing them after their Death to the Dignity of an *inferiour* kind of *Gods* fit to be worſhip'd by Men here on *Earth*, and to have their *Prayers* and *Supplications* addreſs'd to them as proper and powerful *Mediators* and Interceſſors for them with the *Superiour Gods:* To theſe they gave the Titles of *Hero's* and *Semi-dei*, that is, *half Gods*; though the Notion of a *Being* that is juſt *half infinite* ſeems to me very hard to be conceiv'd and defin'd.

Now to take Men off from this kind of *Idolatry*, and to put an end to it, behold *One* in our *Nature exalted to the right hand of the Majeſty on high*, to be worſhipped by *Men* and *Angels: One* that was the truly *Great Benefactor* of Mankind: One that *was dead, and is alive again, and lives for evermore; to make interceſſion for us.*

5*thly*, To give but one *Inſtance* more, which I have already intimated: The World was mightily bent upon addreſſing their requeſts and ſupplications, not to the *Deity* immediately, becauſe their Superſtition thought that too great a preſumption, but by ſome *Mediators* between the *Gods* and *them*, who might with advantage in this humble manner preſent their Requeſts ſo as to find acceptance. To this end they made uſe of the *Dæmons* or *Angels*, and of their *Hero's*, or *Deifyed Men* whom I mentioned before, by whom they put up their *Prayers* to the *Supreme Gods*, hoping by their *Interceſſion*, and *Patronage* of their Cauſe, to obtain a gracious anſwer of them.

In a gracious compliance with this common apprehenſion, and thereby more eaſily and effectually to extirpate this ſort of *Idolatry*, which had been ſo long, and ſo generally practiſed in the World, God was pleaſed to conſtitute and appoint *One* in our *Nature* to be a perpetual *Advocate* and *Interceſſor* in *Heaven* for us, to offer up our *Prayers* to *God his Father*, and to obtain *mercy for us, and grace to help in time of need.*

1 Tim. 2. 5. And for ever to take us off from all other *Mediators*, we are expreſly told in *Scripture*, that as there is but *one God* to whom we are to pray, ſo there there is but *one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus*, by whom we are to offer up our *Prayers* to *God:* And that we need not look out for any other, ſince the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* tells us, that he *is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God by him, ſeeing he lives for ever to make interceſſion for us.* Heb. 7. 25.

And for this reaſon the Church of *Rome* is altogether inexcuſable in this Point, for introducing more *Mediators* and *Interceſſors*, more *Patrons* and *Advocates* in Heaven for us: And this not only without any neceſſity, for who can add any vertue and efficacy to the powerful and prevalent Interceſſion of the *Son of God?* but likewiſe in direct contradiction to the expreſs Conſtitution and appointment of God himſelf, who ſays, there is *but one Mediator between God and Men*, and they ſay there ought to be many more, not only the *B. Virgin*, but all the *Saints* and *Angels* in Heaven. Beſides that by this very thing they revive one notorious Piece of the old *Pagan* Idolatry, which God ſo plainly deſign'd to extinguiſh by appointing *One* only *Mediator between God and Men.*

By this *Condeſcenſion* likewiſe God hath given us the comfortable aſſurance of a moſt powerful and a perpetual *Interceſſor* at *the right hand of God* in our behalf. For if we conſider *Chriſt* as *Man* and of the ſame *Nature* with us, *bone of our bone, and fleſh of our fleſh*, ſo very nearly allied and related to us, we may eaſily believe, that he hath a moſt tender care and concernment for us: That he ſincerely wiſheth our happineſs, and will by all means ſeek to procure it, if we our ſelves by our own willful obſtinacy do not hinder it, and reſiſt the kindneſs and *the counſel of God againſt our ſelves:* For if we be reſolv'd to continue impenitent, there is no help for us; we muſt *die in our Sins*, and Salvation it ſelf cannot ſave us.

But to proceed; it cannot ſurely but be matter of greateſt conſolation to us, that *the Man Chriſt Jeſus* who is now ſo *highly exalted at the right hand of God*, and who hath *all power in Heaven and Earth committed to him*, is our *Patron* and *Advocate* in Heaven to plead our Cauſe with God: Since we cannot but think, that He who was pleaſed to become *Brother to us all* does bear a true affection and good will to us: And that He who aſſumed our *Nature* will heartily eſpouſe our *Cauſe*, and plead it powerfully for us; and will with all poſſible advantage recommend our Petitions and Requeſts to God.

But then, if we conſider further, that He did not only take our *Nature*, but likewiſe took our *infirmities* and bore them many years, in which he had long and continual experience of the ſaddeſt ſufferings to which human *Nature* is ſubject in this World, and *was tempted in all things like as we are:* This gives us ſtill greater aſſurance that he who ſuffer'd and was tempted himſelf cannot but be touch'd with a lively ſenſe of our Infirmities, and muſt have learned by his own Sufferings to compaſſionate ours, and to be ready to ſuccour us when we are tempted, and to afford us *grace* and *help* ſuitable to all our wants and infirmities: For nothing gives us ſo juſt a ſenſe of the Sufferings of *others*, as the remembrance of our *own*, and the bitter experience of the like Sufferings and Temptations in our ſelves.

And this the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* doth very particularly inſiſt upon as matter of greateſt comfort and encouragement to us, that the *Son of God* did not only aſſume our Nature, but *was made in all things like unto us*, and during his abode here upon Earth did ſuffer and *was tempted like as we are: For verily*, ſays the *Apoſtle*, *he took not on him the nature of Angels, but of the ſeed of Abraham: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Prieſt in things pertaining to God: For in that he himſelf ſuffered being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted.*

Heb. 2. 16, 17, 18.

And again, exhorting the *Jews* who were newly converted to *Chriſtianity*, to continue *ſtedfaſt in their Profeſſion*, notwithſtanding all the ſufferings to which upon that account they were expoſed; he comforts them with this conſideration, that we have *at the right hand of God* ſo powerful an *Advocate* and *Interceſſor* for us as the *Son of God*, who is ſenſible of our Caſe, having ſuffered the ſame things Himſelf, and therefore we cannot doubt of his compaſſion to us, and readineſs to ſupport us in the like Sufferings: *Seeing then*, ſays he, *that we have a great High Prieſt that is paſſed into the Heavens, Jeſus the Son of God, let us hold faſt our Profeſſion: For we have not an High-Prieſt that cannot be touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin:* From whence he concludes, that having ſuch an *Interceſſor* we may with great confidence and aſſurance addreſs our Supplications to God for his mercy and help in all our *wants* and *weakneſs*, to ſupply the *one*, and to aſſiſt the *other: Let us therefore*, ſays he, *come boldly to the throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*, χάριν εἰς εὔκαιρον βοήθειαν, *grace for ſeaſonable relief.*

Heb. 4. 14, 15, 16.

So that our *B. Saviour* and *Redeemer*, now that he is advanced to Heaven and exalted to the right hand of God, is not unmindful of us in this height of his Glory and Greatneſs; but with the tendereſt affection and compaſſion to Mankind doth ſtill proſecute the Deſign of our Salvation; and in vertue of his meritorious Obedience and Sufferings, which he preſents to God continually, he offers up our Prayers to Him, and pleads our Cauſe with Him, and repreſents to him all our wants and neceſſities, and procures for us a favourable anſwer of our Prayers, and ſupplies of grace and ſtrength proportionable to our temptations and infirmities.

And thus, by vertue of this prevalent *interceſſion* of his with God for us, our *Sins* are forgiven, and our *Wants* ſupplied, and our *Requeſts* granted, and the gracious *aſſiſtance* and *ſupports* of God's *H. Spirit* are ſeaſonably afforded to us, and we are *kept by the mighty power of God through Faith unto Salvation*: In a word, all thoſe *Bleſſings* and *Benefits* are procured for us by his *Interceſſion* in *Heaven*, which he purchaſed for us by his *Blood* upon *Earth*.

So that in this *Method* of our *Salvation*, beſides many other gracious *Condeſcenſions* which God hath made to the *weakneſs* and *prejudices* of Mankind, our *B. Saviour* hath perfectly ſupplied the *two* great *Wants* concerning which Mankind was at ſo great a loſs before, *namely* the *Want* of an effectual *Expiatory Sacrifice* for *Sin* upon *Earth*, and of a prevalent *Mediator* and *Interceſſor* with God in *Heaven*.

And he hath, in great Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion to our inveterate Prejudices concerning theſe things, taken effectual care fully to ſupply both theſe *Wants*; having *appeared in the end of the World to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*; and in vertue of that Sacrifice *appearing* now *in Heaven in the preſence of God for us*, he is become our perpetual *Advocate* and a moſt prevalent *Interceſſor* with God in our behalf.

For inſtead of the various and endleſs *Sacrifices* of the *Jews* and *Heathens*, the *Son of God* hath *by one Sacrifice for Sins perfected for ever them that are ſanctified*: And inſtead of the *Mediation* of *Dæmons* and *Hero's*, to offer up our *Prayers* to God, which were the *Interceſſors* made uſe of among the *Heathen*, we have *one Mediator between God and Men*, appointed by God himſelf, even the *Son of God*, who *is entred into Heaven it ſelf*, there *to appear in the preſence of God for us*: And to aſſure us that he commiſerates our Caſe, and hath a true and tender ſenſe of our Infirmities and Sufferings, the very manner of his *Interceſſion* for us, as the *Scripture* repreſents it to us, is a plain Demonſtration of the thing: For he intercedes for us in *Heaven* by repreſenting to God his *Father* his Sufferings upon Earth; and pleading them in our behalf: So that the very Argument which he uſeth to God for us cannot but ſtir up compaſſion in Him towards us, and whilſt he repreſents his *Own* Sufferings in our behalf, we cannot think that he is unmindful and inſenſible of *Ours*.

You ſee then that in this *Diſpenſation* of God for our Salvation, by ſending his *Son* in our Nature, things are are not only ſuited in great *condeſcenſion* to our *apprehenſions*, but are likewiſe in great compaſſion to us every way fitted for our comfort and encouragement. God hath made him our great *Patron* and *Advocate* who was our *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation*. And ſurely we have all the reaſon in the World to believe, that he who *in the days of his fleſh* humbled himſelf and became *obedient to the death* for our ſakes, will be ready to do us all good offices now that he is advanced to the right hand of God; that he who died for us upon Earth, now that he lives again, will make interceſſion for us in Heaven and perfect that Salvation which he purchaſed for us upon the Croſs.

And therefore we find in *Scripture*, that as the *purchaſing* of our Salvation is aſcribed to the *Death* and *Sufferings* of *Chriſt*, ſo the *perfecting* of it is attributed to his *Interceſſion* for us at the right hand of his *Father*: *Wherefore*, ſays the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews*, *he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all thoſe that come to God by him, ſeeing he liveth for ever to make interceſſion for us*: He *dyed once* to purchaſe theſe benefits, but *he lives for ever* to procure them for us, and to apply them to us: And now that he is in Heaven, he is as intent upon our Concernments, and lays our Happineſs as much to Heart as when he dwelt here among us on Earth, and poured out his Blood a Sacrifice for Sin upon the Croſs: And that when he lived here below he ſuffer'd and was tempted as we are; this very conſideration gives us the greateſt aſſurance poſſible that he is ſtill touched with the feeling of our Infirmities, and hath a lively ſenſe of our Sufferings; and conſequently, that he doth compaſſionate our Caſe and will uſe all his power and intereſt for our advantage, for our ſeaſonable ſupport and ſuccour in all our trials and ſufferings. But beſides the wonderful *Condeſcenſion* of this *Diſpenſation*, there is likewiſe in the

Fifth and laſt place, a great *Congruity* and *fitneſs* in the thing it ſelf; and this *Method* of our Salvation which the Wiſdom of God hath pitched upon is in many other reſpects very much for our real benefit and comfort. For by this means we have a perfect and familiar *Example* of holineſs and obedience in our own Nature, by which we plainly ſee, that God requires nothing of us, but what he himſelf when he ſubmitted to become Man did think fit to do: For *being made of a Woman*, he was of neceſſity *made under the Law*, and by aſſuming *human Nature* he became naturally ſubject to the *Laws* and conditions of his Being.

And here likewiſe is a proviſion made for the *Expiation* and *Forgiveneſs* of our *Sins*, in a way not only very honourable to the Juſtice of God and the Authority of his Laws, but likewiſe very effectual to diſcountenance Sin and to deter Men from it; ſince God did not think fit to forgive the Sins of Men without great Sufferings, and that in our Nature: For though God was willing to ſave the Sinner, yet rather than encouragement ſhould be given to Sin by letting it go unpuniſh'd, he was contented to give up the *dearly beloved of his Soul* to be a *Sacrifice* and *Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*.

By the ſame means alſo we have a moſt powerful Antidote againſt the fear of Suffering, and particularly againſt the fear of Death, one of the greateſt ſlaveries of human Nature: So alſo the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* tells us, that Heb. 2. 14, 15. *for this cauſe* Chriſt *himſelf alſo took part of fleſh and blood, that by Death he might deſtroy him that had the power of Death; that is, the Devil; and might deliver thoſe who through fear of Death were all their life-time ſubject to bondage.*

Again, we have hereby full aſſurance of a bleſſed Immortality in another Life, becauſe in our Nature Death and all the Powers of Darkneſs were baffled and overcome. The *Death* of *Chriſt*, which could not have been without his *Incarnation*, and ſo likewiſe his *Reſurrection* from the dead and his *Aſcenſion* into Heaven, are ſenſible Demonſtrations to all Mankind of a bleſſed *Immortality* after Death; which is the moſt powerful motive in the World to Obedience and a holy Life.

And laſtly, we may upon this account promiſe to our ſelves a fair and equal *Trial* at the *Judgment* of the *great Day*, becauſe we ſhall then be judged by a Man like our ſelves. Our *Saviour* and *Judge* himſelf hath told us, that for this reaſon *God hath committed all Judgment to the Son, becauſe he is the Son* John 5. 22, 27. *of Man.* And this in human Judgments is accounted a great Privilege, to be judged by thoſe who are of the ſame Rank and Condition with our ſelves, and who are likely to underſtand beſt and moſt carefully to examine and conſider all our circumſtances, and to render our Caſe as if it were their own.

So equitably doth God deal with us, that we ſhall be acquitted or condemned by ſuch a Judge as according to human meaſures we our ſelves ſhould have choſen; by One in our own Nature *who was made in all things like unto us*, that only excepted which would have rendered him incapable of being our *Judge*, becauſe it would have made him a *Criminal* like our ſelves. And therefore the *Apoſtle* offers this as a firm ground of aſſurance to us that *God will judge the World in Righteouſneſs*, becauſe this Judgment ſhall be adminiſtred by a *Man* like our ſelves; *He hath*, ſaith he, *appointed a Day wherein he will Judge the World in Righteouſneſs, by that Man whom he hath ordained*, &c.

I ſhall now only make a practical *Inference* or two from what hath been delivered upon this *Argument* and ſo conclude this whole *Diſcourſe*.

Firſt, The ſerious conſideration of what hath been ſaid concerning the *Incarnation* of our *B. Saviour* ſhould effectually prevail with us to comply with the great End and Deſign of the *Son of God's* becoming *Man* and *dwelling amongſt us*, and of his doing and ſuffering all thoſe things which are recorded of him in the *Hiſtory* of his *Life* and *Death* written by the *H. Evangeliſts*: I ſay, the conſideration hereof ſhould perſuade us all to comply with the great *Deſign* of all this, which is the *Reformation* of Mankind and the *Recovery* of us out of that ſinful and miſerable eſtate into which we were fallen: Becauſe the *Salvation* which the *Son of God* hath purchaſed for us, and which he offers to us by the *Goſpel*, is not to be accompliſhed and brought about any other way than by our forſaking our Sins and reforming our *Lives*. *The Grace of God, which hath appeared to all Men and brings Salvation*, will not make us partakers of it in any other way, nor by any other means, than by *teaching us to deny ungodlineſs and worldly luſts*, and to *live ſoberly and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* God *ſent his Son* Jeſus *to bleſs us, by turning us away every one from his iniquities*; and unleſs this change be effectually wrought in us, we are utterly incapable of all the Bleſſings of the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*. All that He hath done for us *without us* will avail us nothing, unleſs we be *inwardly* transformed and *renewed in the ſpirit of our minds*; unleſs we become *new Creatures*, unleſs we make it the continual and ſincere endeavour of our lives to *keep the commandments of God.*

Heb. 12. 14. For the *Scripture* is moſt expreſs and poſitive in this matter; That *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord:* That *every Man that hath this hope in* 1 Joh. 3. 3. *Him*, that is, in *Chriſt*, to be ſaved by *Him*, muſt *purifie himſelf even as he is pure.* We do not rightly and truly believe *that Jeſus Chriſt came into the World to ſave Sinners*, if we be not alſo throughly convinc'd that it is as neceſſary for us to leave our Sins, as to believe this moſt *faithful* and *credible Saying.*

The Obedience and Sufferings of our *B. Saviour* are indeed *accounted to us for Righteouſneſs*, and will moſt certainly redound to our unſpeakable benefit and advantage upon our performance of the *Condition* which the *Goſpel* doth require on our Part, *namely*, that *every man that names the Name of Chriſt depart from iniquity:* And the *Grace* of God's *H. Spirit* is ready to enable us to perform this Condition, if we earneſtly ask it, and do ſincerely co-operate with it: Provided we do what we can on *our* part, God will not be wanting to us on his. But if we *receive the Grace of God in vain*, and take no care to perform the *Condition*, and do neglect to implore the Grace and aſſiſtance of God's *H. Spirit* to that purpoſe, we have none to blame but our ſelves; becauſe it is then wholly our own fault if we fall ſhort of that Happineſs which *Chriſt* hath purchaſed, and promiſed to us upon ſuch eaſie and reaſonable *Conditions* as the *Goſpel* propoſeth.

But I no where find that God hath promiſed to force Happineſs upon the negligent, and a Reward upon the *wicked and ſlothful Servant:* A *Gift* may be given for nothing, but ſurely a *Reward* does in the very nature of it always ſuppoſe ſome *Service.* None but *a righteous Man* is capable of *a righteous Man's Reward:* And St. *John* hath ſufficiently cautioned us not to think our ſelves *Righteous* unleſs we be *doers of righteouſneſs: Little children,* ſays he, 1 Joh. 3. 7. *let no man deceive you, he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as He is righteous.* This is ſo very plain a *Text,* that if Men were not either very eaſie to be deceived by others, or very willing to deceive themſelves, they could not poſſibly miſtake the meaning of it: And therefore I will repeat it once more, *Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteouſneſs is righteous, even as He is righteous.*

Secondly, The other *Inference* which I would make from the precedent *Diſcourſe* is this, That with all poſſible thankfulneſs we ſhould acknowledge and adore the wonderful Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion of Almighty God in ſending his *only begotten Son* into the World in our Nature to be *made fleſh,* and to *dwell amongſt us* in order to our Recovery and Salvation: A Method and Diſpenſation not only full of mercy and goodneſs, but of great Condeſcenſion to our meanneſs, and of mighty vertue and efficacy for our Redemption and Deliverance from the Guilt and Dominion of Sin; and upon all accounts every way ſo much for our benefit and advantage. So that well may we ſay with St. *Paul, This is a faithful Saying,* πιστὸς λόγος, a credible Word, *and worthy of all acceptation,* that is, fit to be embraced and entertained with all poſſible Joy and Thankfulneſs, *That Jeſus Chriſt came into the World to ſave Sinners.*

What an everlaſting Fountain of the moſt invaluable Bleſſings and Benefits to Mankind is the Incarnation of the Son of God? His vouchſafing to aſſume our Nature, and to reſide and converſe ſo long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and *only begotten Son of God* ſhould condeſcend to do all this for us? That the High and Glorious Majeſty of Heaven ſhould ſtoop down to the Earth, and be contented to be clothed with Miſery and Mortality? That He ſhould ſubmit to ſo poor and low a Condition, to ſuch dreadful and diſgraceful Sufferings for our ſakes? For what are *We?* vile and deſpicable Creatures, Guilty and Unworthy, Offenders and Apoſtates, Enemies and Rebels. Bleſſed God! how great is thy Goodneſs? how infinite are thy tender Mercies and Compaſſions to Mankind? That thou ſhould'ſt regard us whilſt we neglected thee, and remember us in our low condition when we had *forgotten thee days without number,* and ſhould'ſt take ſuch pity on us when we ſhew'd none to our ſelves; and whilſt we were thy declared and implacable Enemies ſhould'ſt expreſs more kindneſs and good will to us, than the beſt of Men ever did to their beſt Friends.

When we reflect ſeriouſly upon thoſe great things which God hath done in our behalf, and conſider that mighty Salvation which God hath wrought for us; what thanks can we poſſibly render, what acknowledgments ſhall we ever be able to make, I do not ſay equal but in any wiſe meet and becoming, to this great Benefactor of Mankind? Who, when we had ſo highly offended and provok'd Him, and ſo fooliſhly and ſo fatally undone our ſelves; when we were become ſo guilty and ſo miſerable, and ſo much fitter to have eternally been the objects of his wrath and indignation than of his pity and compaſſion, was pleas'd to ſend his *own*, his *only Son* into the World to *ſeek* and *ſave us*; and by him to repair all our ruines, to *forgive all our iniquities*, to *heal all our* ſpiritual *diſeaſes*, *and to crown us with* loving-kindneſs and tender mercies.

And what Sacrifices of Praiſe and Thankſgiving ſhould we alſo offer up to this gracious and moſt merciful *Redeemer* of ours, *the everlaſting Son of the Father*, who debaſed himſelf ſo infinitely for our ſakes, and *when he took upon Him to deliver Man did not abhor the Virgins Womb*: Who was contented to be born ſo obſcurely, and to live all his life in a poor and perſecuted condition; and was pleaſed both to undergo and to *overcome the ſharpneſs of Death*, *that he might open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers*?

Every time we have occaſion to meditate upon this, eſpecially when we are communicating at his *H. Table*, and receiving the bleſſed *Symbols* and *Pledges* of his precious *Death* and *Paſſion*; How ſhould *our Hearts burn within us* and leap for Joy? How ſhould the remembrance of it revive and raiſe our Spirits, and put us into an Extaſie of Love and Gratitude to this great *Friend and Lover of Souls*: And with the *B. Mother* of our *Lord*, how ſhould *our Souls*, upon that bleſſed occaſion, *magnifie the Lord*, *and our Spirits rejoyce in God our Saviour*?

The Holy Men of old were tranſported with Joy at the obſcure and confuſed apprehenſion and remote foreſight of ſo great a Bleſſing, at ſo great a diſtance: It is ſaid of *Abraham*, *the Father of the faithful*, *that he ſaw His Day afar off and was glad*: How ſhould we then be affected with Joy and Thankfulneſs, to whom the *Son of God* and *B. Saviour* of Men is actually come? *He* is come many ages ago, and hath enlightened a great part of the World with his Glory. Yea, He is come to *us*, who were in a manner ſeparated from the reſt of the World: To *Us* is this great *Light* come, who had ſo long *ſate in Darkneſs and the ſhadow of Death*: And this *mighty Salvation* which He *hath wrought for us* is near to every one of us that is willing to lay hold of it, and to accept it upon thoſe gracious terms and conditions upon which it is offer'd to us in his *H. Goſpel*.

And by His *Coming* he hath delivered Mankind from that groſs Ignorance
1 Joh. 1. 20. and *thick Darkneſs which covered the Nations*: *And we know that the Son of God is come*, *and hath given us an underſtanding to know him that is true*: *And we are in Him that is* true, *even in his Son Jeſus Chriſt*: *This is the true God*,
ver. 21. *and eternal Life*. And then it immediately follows, *Little Children*, *keep your ſelves from Idols*. What can be the meaning of this Caution? and what is the Connection of it with the foregoing Diſcourſe? It is plainly this: That the *Son of God* by *His Coming* had reſcued Mankind from the ſottiſh Worſhip of *Idols*; and therefore he Cautions *Chriſtians* to take great heed of relapſing into *Idolatry* by worſhipping a *Creature*, or the *Image* and likeneſs of any Creature inſtead of God. And becauſe he foreſaw that it might be objected to *Chriſtians*, as in fact it was afterwards by the *Heathen*, that the Worſhip of *Chriſt*, who was a Man, was as much Idolatry as that which the *Chriſtians* charged the *Heathens* withal: Therefore St. *John* effectually to prevent the force of this plauſible Objection, though he perpetually, throughout his *Goſpel* declares Chriſt to be really a *Man*, yet he expreſly alſo affirms Him to be *God*, and *the true God*; and conſequently, *Chriſtians* might ſafely pay Divine Worſhip to *Him* without fear or danger of *Idolatry*: *We are in Him that is true*, *even in his Son Jeſus Chriſt*: *This is the true God and eternal Life*: *Little Children*, *keep your ſelves from Idols*.

But this I am ſenſible is a Digreſſion, yet ſuch a one as may not be alltogether uſeleſs.

To proceed then in the recital of thoſe great Bleſſings which the *Coming* of the *Son of God* hath brought to Mankind. He hath reſcued us from the bondage of *Sin*, and from the ſlavery of *Satan*: He hath openly proclaimed Pardon and Reconciliation to the World: He hath clearly revealed eternal Life to us, which was but obſcurely made known before, both to *Jews* and *Gentiles*; *but is now made manifeſt by the appearance of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who hath aboliſhed Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light by the Goſpel:* He hath purchaſed this great Bleſſing for us; and is ready to confer it upon us, if we will be contented to leave our Sins and to be ſaved by Him: A Condition without which as Salvation is not to be had, ſo if it were, it wou'd not be deſirable, it could not make us happy; becauſe our Sins would ſtill ſeparate between God and us, and the guilt and horrour of our own Minds would make us eternally miſerable.

And now ſurely we cannot but thus judge, that all the Praiſes and Acknowledgments, all the Service and Obedience which we can poſſibly render to Him, are infinitely beneath thoſe infinite Obligations which the *Son of God* hath laid upon the Sons of Men by his *Coming into the World to ſave Sinners.*

What then remains, but that at all times, and more eſpecially at this *Seaſon* we gratefully acknowledge and joyfully commemorate this great and amazing Goodneſs of God to us, in the *Incarnation* of his *Son* for the Redemption and Salvation of the ſinful and miſerable Race of Mankind? A Method and Diſpenſation of the Divine Grace and Wiſdom, not only full of mercy and condeſcenſion, but of great power and vertue to purifie our Hearts and to reform our Lives; to beget in us a fervent love of *God our Saviour*, and a perfect hatred and deteſtation of our Sins, and a ſtedfaſt purpoſe and reſolution to lead a new Life, following the Commandments of God, and walking in his ways all the days of our life. In a word, a Method that is every way calculated for our unſpeakable Benefit and Comfort.

Since then the *Son of God* hath ſo graciouſly condeſcended to be *made in all things like unto us, Sin only excepted*; let us aſpire to be as like to Him as is poſſible in the exemplary Holineſs and Vertues of his Life. We cannot be like Him in his Miracles, but we may in his Mercy and Compaſſion: We cannot imitate his Divine Power, but we may reſemble Him in his Innocency and Humility, in his Meekneſs and Patience. And as He aſſumed Human Nature, ſo let us re-aſſume Humanity which we have in great meaſure depraved and put off; and let us *put on bowels of mercy* towards thoſe that are in miſery, and be ready to relieve the poor for *His* ſake, *who being rich, for our ſakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.*

To conclude, Let us imitate *Him* in *that* which was his great Work and Buſineſs here upon Earth, and which of all other did beſt become the *Son of God*; I mean, in His *going about doing good:* That by *giving Glory to God in the Higheſt*, and by endeavouring as much as in us lies, to procure and promote *Peace on Earth, and Good Will amongſt Men*, we may at laſt be *made meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light:* Through the Mercies and Merits of our *B. Saviour* and *Redeemer*. *Amen.*

Almighty God, who haſt given us thy only begotten Son to take our Nature upon Him, and as at this Time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerate and made thy Children by Adoption and Grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the ſame our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the ſame Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XLVII.

Concerning the *Sacrifice and Satisfaction of Chriſt, &c.*

HEB. IX. 26.

But now once hath he appeared in the end of the World, to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf.

AMONG many other great Ends and Reaſons for which God was pleaſed to ſend his Son into the World to dwell amongſt us, this was one of the chief, that by a long courſe of the greateſt innocency and the greateſt ſufferings in our Nature he might be capable to make a perfect Expiation of Sin: *But now once in the end of the World*, ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, in the concluſion of the Ages, that is, in the laſt Age of the World, which is the *Goſpel* Age, *hath he appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf.*

The general Deſign of God in the ſending his Son into the World was to ſave Mankind from eternal death and miſery, and to purchaſe for us eternal life and happineſs. So the *Author* of our Salvation himſelf tells us, That *God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life.* Joh. 3. 16.

Now in order to the procuring of this Salvation for us, the impediments and hindrances of it were to be removed: theſe were the *guilt*, and the *dominion* of Sin: By the *guilt* of Sin we were become obnoxious to the wrath of God and to eternal condemnation, and by the *defilement* and *dominion* of it we were incapable of the happineſs of Heaven and the reward of eternal Life.

To remove theſe two great Hindrances two things were neceſſary: the Forgiveneſs of ſins paſt in order to our deliverance from the wrath of God and the eternal torments of the next Life; and the Reformation of our hearts and lives to make us capable of eternal Life and Happineſs in another World. And both theſe, if God had ſo pleaſed, might for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, have been effected by the abundant mercy and powerful grace of God, without this wonderful method and diſpenſation of ſending his Son in our Nature *to take away ſin by the ſacrifice of himſelf*: But it ſeems the wiſdom of God thought fit to pitch upon this way and method of our Salvation, and no doubt for very good *Reaſons*; amongſt which theſe *three* ſeem to be very obvious and very conſiderable.

Firſt, To vindicate the honour of his Laws, which if Sin had gone altogether unpuniſh'd would have been in great danger of falling into contempt. For if God had proclaimed a general Pardon of Sin to all Mankind without any teſtimony of his wrath and diſpleaſure againſt it, who would have had any great veneration for his Laws, or have believed in good earneſt, that the violation of them had been either ſo extremely offenſive to Him, or ſo very dangerous to the Sinner?

Therefore to maintain the honour of his Laws, rather than Sin ſhould paſs unpuniſh'd, God would lay the puniſhment of it upon his only begotten Son, the deareſt Perſon to him in the World: Which is a greater teſtimony of his high diſpleaſure againſt Sin, and of his tender regard and concernment for the honour of his Laws, than if the Sinner had ſuffered the puniſhment due to it in his own perſon.

Secondly, Another Reaſon of this Diſpenſation, and that likewiſe very conſiderable, was, that God might forgive Sin in ſuch a way as yet effectually to diſcountenance and diſcourage it, and to create in us the greateſt horror and hatred of it: Which could not have been by an abſolute Pardon, without any puniſhment inflicted, or ſatisfaction made to the honour of his Juſtice. For had Sin been ſo eaſily forgiven, who would have been ſenſible of the great evil of it, or afraid to offend for the future?

But when God makes his own Son a Sacrifice, and lays upon him the puniſhment due for the Iniquities of us all, this is a demonſtration that God hates Sin as much, if it be poſſible, as he loved his own Son. For this plainly ſhews what Sin deſerves, and what the Sinner may juſtly expect, if after this ſeverity of God againſt it he will venture to commit it.

And if this Sacrifice for Sin, and the Pardon purchaſed by it, be not effectual to reclaim us from Sin, and to beget in us an eternal dread and deteſtation of it: If we ſin wilfully after ſo clear a Revelation of the *wrath of God from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of Men*, there remains *no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation to conſume the adverſaries.* For what could God do more to teſtifie his diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and to diſcountenance the practice of it, than to make his only Son an Offering for Sin, and to give him up to be wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our Iniquities? In what clearer Glaſs can we at once behold the great evil and demerit of Sin, and the infinite goodneſs and mercy of God to Sinners, than in the ſorrows and ſufferings of the Son of God for our Sins and for our ſakes?

Thirdly, Another reaſon of this Diſpenſation ſeems to have been a gracious condeſcenſion and compliance of Almighty God with a certain apprehenſion and perſuaſion, which had very early and univerſally obtained among Mankind, concerning the expiation of Sin and appeaſing the offended Deity by Sacrifices: by the Sacrifices of living Creatures, of Birds and Beaſts; and afterwards by Human Sacrifices and *the blood of their Sons and Daughters:* by offering to God, as the expreſſion is in the *Prophet*, *their firſt-born for their tranſgreſſion, and the fruit of their body for the ſin of their ſouls.*

And this Notion of the expiation of Sin by Sacrifice, whether it had its firſt Riſe from *Divine Revelation*, and was afterwards propagated from Age to Age by *Tradition:* I ſay, from whence ſoever this Notion came, it hath of all other Notions concerning Religion, excepting thoſe of the *Being* of God and his *Providence*, and of the *Recompences* of *another Life*, found the moſt univerſal reception, and the thing hath been the moſt generally practiſed in all Ages and Nations, not only in the *old*, but in the *new* diſcovered parts of the World.

And indeed a very great part of the *Jewiſh* Religion, which was inſtituted by God himſelf, ſeems to have been a plain condeſcenſion to the general Apprehenſion of Mankind, concerning this way of appeaſing the offended Deity by Sacrifices: As it was alſo a Figure of that great and efficacious Sacrifice which ſhould in due time be offered to God to make atonement once for all the Sins of Mankind.

And the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* doth very particularly inſiſt upon this condeſcenſion of God to them, in the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel: and whereas they apprehended ſo great a neceſſity of an *High-Prieſt* and of *Sacrifices* to make expiation for the ſins of the People, that it was an eſtabliſh'd *Principle* among them, that *without ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion of Sins*; God was pleaſed to comply ſo far with theſe Notions and Apprehenſions of theirs, as to make his own Son both a *Prieſt* and a *Sacrifice*, to do that once for all which their own *High-Prieſt* pretended to do *year by year*.

And from hence the ſame *Apoſtle* takes occaſion to recommend to them the *new Covenant* and *Diſpenſation* of the *Goſpel*, as having a greater and more perfect *High-Prieſt* and a more excellent *Sacrifice*, than were the *High-Prieſts* and the *Sacrifices* under the *Law*; the *Son of God* having *by one Sacrifice of himſelf obtained eternal Redemption for us, and perfected for ever them that are ſanctified.*

And this Apprehenſion prevailed no leſs in the *Heathen* World, and proceeded to the Sacrifices of Men, even of their *firſt-born*. And with this Apprehenſion, not to countenance but to aboliſh it, God was pleaſed to comply ſo far as to make a general Attonement for the Sins of Mankind by the Death of his Son, appearing in our Nature to become a voluntary Sacrifice for us: God permitting him to be unjuſtly put to death and his Blood to be ſhed by the malice of Men, in appearance as a Malefactor, but in truth as a Martyr; and accepting of his Death as a meritorious Sacrifice and *propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*: That by this wiſe counſel and permiſſion of his Providence he might for ever put an end to that barbarous and inhuman way of ſerving God which had been ſo long in uſe and practice among them: The Son of God by the voluntary Sacrifice of himſelf having effected all that at once, and for ever, which Mankind from the beginning of the World had in vain been endeavouring to accompliſh by innumerable and continual Sacrifices; namely, the pardon of their Sins, and perfect Peace and Reconciliation with God.

For theſe Ends and Reaſons, and perhaps for many more as great and conſiderable as theſe which our ſhallow underſtandings are not able to fathom, the Wiſdom of God hath pitched upon this way and method of delivering Mankind from the guilt and dominion of Sin by the Sacrifice of his Son: And to this end it was requiſite that he ſhould appear in our Nature and dwell amongſt us for ſome conſiderable time, that by a long courſe of the greateſt Innocency and of the greateſt Sufferings in our Nature he might be capable of making a perfect expiation of Sin.

So that *two* things were requiſite to qualifie him for this purpoſe; perfect *Innocency* and *Obedience*, and great *Sufferings* in our Nature, even to the ſuffering of Death. Both theſe the *Scripture* declares to be neceſſary qualifications of a Perſon capable to make expiation of Sin; and both theſe were found in the Perſon of our *B. Saviour*.

Firſt, Unſpotted *Innocency* and perfect *Obedience*. This the *Scripture* teſtifies concerning Him, and the whole courſe of his Life and Actions. *He*
Heb. 4. 15. *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin*, ſaith the *Apoſtle* to the
Joh. 8. 29. *Hebrews*. *He always did the things which pleaſed God*, as he teſtifies con-
1 Pet. 2. 22. cerning himſelf, *and we are ſure that his witneſs is true*. *He did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth*, as St. *Peter* tells us of Him. And this was neceſſary to qualifie him for the perfect expiation of Sin, whether we conſider Him as a *Prieſt*, or as a *Sacrifice*.

As a *Prieſt*, he could not have been fit to make expiation for the Sins of others, had he not been without ſin himſelf. And this the *Apoſtle* tells us, is one great Advantage of our *High-Prieſt* under the *Goſpel*, above the *High-*

Prieſt under the *Law*, who being a Sinner himſelf, as well as thoſe for whom he offer'd, had need to offer for himſelf before he could make ſo much as a Legal expiation for the Sins of others: But a perfect and effectual expiation of Sin, ſo as to purge the Conſcience from the guilt of it, cannot be made but by an High-Prieſt who is holy and innocent himſelf; *For ſuch an High-Prieſt*, ſaith the *Apoſtle*, *became us*, that is, now under the Diſpenſation of the *Goſpel*, when a perfect expiation of Sins is to be made, *ſuch an High-Prieſt* is neceſſary, *as is holy*, *harmleſs*, *undefiled*, *ſeparate from Sinners*, *who needs not as thoſe High-Prieſts*, that is, as the High-Prieſts under the Law, *to offer up ſacrifice firſt for his own Sins*, *and then for the People:* The plain force of which Argument is this, that he who will be qualified to make atonement for the Sins of others muſt be without ſin himſelf. Heb. 7.26, 27.

And then if we conſider *Chriſt* as a *Sacrifice* for Sin; perfect holineſs is neceſſary to make a Sacrifice acceptable and available for the expiation of Sin. The neceſſity of this was typified by the quality of the *expiatory Sacrifices* under the *Law:* the *Beaſts* that were to be offered were to be *without ſpot and blemiſh:* To which the *Apoſtle* alludes, ſpeaking of the quality and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Chriſt: How much more*, ſays he, *ſhall the blood of Chriſt*, *who through the eternal Spirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God*, *purge your conſciences from dead works to ſerve the living God?* And to the ſame purpoſe St. *Peter*, *Foraſmuch as ye know ye were not redeemed with corruptible things*, *as ſilver and gold*, *but with the precious blood of Chriſt*, *as of a Lamb without blemiſh and without ſpot*, *&c.* hereby intimating, that nothing leſs than the perfect innocency and holineſs of him who was to be a Sacrifice for us could have expiated the guilt of our ſins, and purchaſed eternal Redemption for us. Heb. 9.14. 1 Pet. 1.18, 19.

Secondly, Great *Sufferings* likewiſe in our Nature, even to the ſuffering of Death, were requiſite to the perfect expiation of Sin: I ſay, even to the ſuffering of Death. For the Sacrifices which were to make expiation, were to be ſlain. And it was a conſtant *Maxim* and Principle among the *Jews*, and the *Apoſtle* more than once in this *Epiſtle* ſeems to allow and confirm it, that *without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of Sins.*

Not that God could not have pardoned Sin without ſatisfaction made to his Juſtice, either by the ſuffering of the Sinner himſelf, or of a Sacrifice in his ſtead: But, according to the Method and Diſpenſation which the Wiſdom of God had pitched upon, he was reſolved not to diſpenſe Forgiveneſs in any other way. For which reaſon he ſeems either to have poſſeſs'd Mankind with this *Principle*, or to have permitted them to be ſo perſuaded, that *Sin was not to be expiated but by Blood*, that is, either by the Death of the Sinner, or of the Sacrifice.

Now the Life of our *B. Saviour*, as well as his Death, was made up of Sufferings of one kind or other: Continual Sufferings from his Cradle to his Croſs, from the time he drew his firſt breath to his giving up of the ghoſt: And not only continual Sufferings, but the greateſt that ever were, conſidering the Dignity of the Perſon that ſuffered, and the nature of the Sufferings: Conſidering likewiſe that theſe Sufferings were not only wholly undeſerved on his part, but unmerited alſo on ours, for whoſe ſake he ſubmitted himſelf to them: Nay, on the contrary, he had obliged to the utmoſt thoſe for whom and by whom he ſuffered, and continued ſtill to oblige them by the greateſt Bleſſings and Benefits purchaſed and procured for them by thoſe very Sufferings which with ſo much Malice and Cruelty they inflicted on him.

Had our *B. Saviour* been a mere Man, the perfect Innocency and unſpotted Purity of his whole Life; his Zeal to do the Will of God, and his delight in doing it; his infinite pains and unwearied diligence in *going about doing good:* His conſtant Obedience to God in the moſt difficult Inſtances, and his perſeverance in well-doing, notwithſtanding the ill uſage and hard meaſure, the bitter Reproaches and Perſecutions he met withal for it, from a wicked and ill-natur'd World: His perfect ſubmiſſion to the Will of God, his invincible Patience under the greateſt and bittereſt Sufferings, and his infinite Charity to his Enemies and Perſecutors: Theſe muſt needs be highly acceptable to God, and if Man could merit of God, likely enough to be available for the Sins of others.

But our *Saviour* and our *Sacrifice* being the *Son of God* in our Nature: and He voluntarily aſſuming it, and ſubmitting to the condition of Humanity in its loweſt and moſt miſerable ſtate, Sin only excepted; and his being contented to live a Life of doing good and ſuffering evil, and at laſt to be put to Death and ſlain a Sacrifice for us: The Dignity of the Perſon who did and ſuffered all this for us, and his dearneſs to God, muſt needs add a mighty value to ſo perfect an Obedience and ſuch patient Sufferings; ſo as to render them a full, perfect and ſufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction for the Sins of the whole World.

And all this being willingly performed in our Nature, and accepted by God as done upon our account, may reaſonably be preſumed to redound to our benefit and advantage, as much as if we our ſelves had performed it in our own perſons: Nothing being ſo proper, and ſo available to make an *honourable amends* and ſatisfaction to the Juſtice of God for the Sins of all Mankind, as the voluntary Obedience and Sufferings of Human Nature in a Perſon of ſo great Dignity and dearneſs to God as his eternal and entirely beloved Son.

Now that Expiation of Sin was made by the Sufferings of *Chriſt* in our ſtead, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe *three* ways.

Firſt, From plain Teſtimonies of *H. Scripture*, declaring this matter to us as clearly and fully as it is poſſible for words to do it.

Secondly, From the nature and intention of *Expiatory Sacrifices*, both among the *Jews* and Heathen; to which the Death of *Chriſt* is in the *New Teſtament* ſo frequently compared, and in point of vertue and efficacy to take away Sin infinitely preferred to it.

Thirdly, By vindicating this Method and Diſpenſation of the Divine Wiſdom from the Objections which are brought againſt it; and by ſhewing that there is nothing in it that is unreaſonable, or any wiſe unworthy of God.

I. I. I ſhall produce ſome plain Teſtimonies of *H. Scripture*, which declare this matter as clearly and fully as it is poſſible for words to do it; namely, that the *Son of God*, in order to the effectual *Expiation* of Sin, ſuffered in our ſtead, and bore the wrath of God for us, and made a perfect Atonement for Sin, and obtained eternal Redemption for us.

This the *Scripture* declares to us in great variety of expreſſions; as, that *Chriſt died for us*, and *for our Sins*; that he was *a Sacrifice for us*, and *a propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*; that is, of all Mankind; that *he bare our Sins in his own body on the Tree*, and *appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf*; that *we are juſtified in his blood*, and *redeemed by the price of it*; and in very many other expreſſions to the ſame purpoſe.

And this is ſo evidently the ſcope and meaning of theſe Expreſſions, that it cannot be denied without offering the greateſt violence imaginable to the *H. Scriptures.* For can any Man think that God would have uſed ſo many expreſſions in *Scripture*, the plain and moſt obvious ſenſe of all which is, that the *Son of God* ſuffered for our Sins and in our ſtead, if this had not been his deſign and meaning? Would not this be in effect to ſay, that God had written a great Book to puzzle and confound, but not to inſtruct and teach Mankind?

I will at preſent ſingle out ſome few of thoſe many *Texts* of *Scripture* which might be produced to this purpoſe: *He hath made him to be ſin for* 2 Cor. 5. 21. *us, who knew no ſin*; that is, he hath made him who had no ſin himſelf a Sacrifice for our ſins. Again; *and walk in love, as Chriſt alſo hath loved us* Eph. 5. 10. *and given himſelf for us, an offering and a ſacrifice to God.* St. *Peter* to the 1 Pet. 1. 18. ſame purpoſe tells us, that *Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered for Sins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the fleſh*: Here *Chriſt* is ſaid to have *ſuffered for Sin*; and to declare, that the *Apoſtle* did not only mean that *Chriſt* ſuffered upon the occaſion of our Sins, but that he ſuffered in the place and ſtead of the Sinner; he adds, *the juſt for the unjuſt*; that is, the Son of God, who was innocent and had no Sin, ſuffered for us who were Sinners; or as it is elſewhere expreſs'd, *he bare our ſins in his own body on the Tree.*

It is true indeed, that *Chriſt* ſuffered for our benefit and advantage; which the *Socinians* would have to be all that is meant in the *Texts* which I have cited: But then it ought to be conſidered, that *Chriſt's* ſuffering for our benefit and advantage does by no means exclude, nor is any wiſe inconſiſtent with his ſuffering in our ſtead. For whoever ſuffers in another Man's ſtead, and to ſave him from ſuffering, does undoubtedly ſuffer for his benefit and advantage, and gives the beſt demonſtration of it that can be: But the manner of the expreſſion, if compared with other parallel *Texts* of *Scripture*, and eſpecially with what is ſo often ſaid of our *Saviour's* being a *Sacrifice*, which I ſhall have occaſion further to urge by and by: I ſay, the manner of the expreſſion, if well conſidered, will appear to any Man that is not contentious to ſignifie our *Saviour's* ſuffering inſtead of the Sinner.

But not to argue from words and phraſes, I will produce two *Texts* which declare this matter ſo plainly, that the force of them is not to be avoided without the moſt ſhameful wreſting and perverting of them. *This is my Com-* Joh. 15. 12. *mandment*, ſays our *Saviour*, *that you love one another, as I have loved you.* ver. 13. How is that? he declares in the next words, *Greater love than this hath no Man, that a Man lay down his life for his friend*; that is, that he be contented to die in his ſtead. And to the ſame purpoſe St. *Paul*, *For when ye* Rom. 6. 6, 7, 8. *were yet Sinners in due time Chriſt died for the ungodly*: Now the queſtion is, whether by this expreſſion of *Chriſt's dying for the ungodly* be meant only his dying for the benefit and advantage of Sinners, but not his dying in their ſtead? This, let the words which immediately follow determine: *For ſcarcely for a righteous Man will one dye, yet peradventure for a good Man one would even dare to dye: But God commendeth his love to us, in that whilſt we were yet Sinners Chriſt died for us.* And now I appeal to any Man of good ſenſe, whether it be not plain that the *Apoſtle* here ſpeaks of *Chriſt's* dying for ſinners in the ſame ſenſe as one Man is ſaid to dye for another; that is, to ſave another from death; which what is it elſe but to dye in his ſtead? He that can deny this, is perverſe to the higheſt degree, and I fear almoſt beyond the poſſibility of being convinced.

And the Argument from theſe two *Texts* is ſo much the ſtronger, becauſe we do not here reaſon merely from the phraſe and expreſſion, but from the main Scope of our *Saviour*'s diſcourſe in the *one*, and of St. *Paul's* in the other. For the deſign of both is to recommend the Superlative love of *Chriſt* to us above the greateſt love that ever any Man expreſs'd to another. The higheſt pitch that human affection did ever riſe to, was for a Man to lay down his life for his Friend; but the *Son of God* laid down his life for his Enemies. *Scarcely*, ſays St. *Paul, would one lay down his life for a righteous Man*, that is, for one who is but ſtrictly, juſt and honeſt, and does no body wrong; but for a *good Man*, that is, for one that is kind and beneficial to all, and hath obliged Mankind by great Benefits, ſome one may be found that would lay down his life to ſave the life of ſuch a Perſon: But the love of *Chriſt* hath gone far beyond this: He *dyed for Sinners*, for thoſe who were neither *good Men* nor *righteous: But God commendeth his love to us, in that whilſt we were yet Sinners Chriſt dyed for us.* Now where doth the force of this Argument lye, if not in this? that *Chriſt* hath done that for us, who were *Enemies* and *Sinners*, which ſome very few perſons in the World have done for their *Friend*, or for ſome very eminently *good Man*: And what is that? Why, they have laid down their lives in their ſtead: And ſo *Chriſt* hath done for us. This ſeems to be ſo very plain, that I do not ſee how the force of this Argument is poſſible to be avoided.

It is evident then from *Scripture*, that *Chriſt* dyed not only for our advantage but in our ſtead; as truly and really as any Man ever did or can dye for one another who lays down his own life to ſave another from death. For if *Chriſt* had not dyed, we had periſhed everlaſtingly; and becauſe he dyed we are ſaved from eternal Death and Miſery.

And though this be no where in *Scripture* ſpoken of by the name or *term* of *Satisfaction*, yet it is ſaid to be the *price* of our *Redemption*; which ſurely is the ſame in effect with *Satiſfaction*. For as we are Sinners we are liable, and, as I may ſay, indebted to the Juſtice of God: And the Son of God, by his Death and Sufferings in our Nature, hath diſcharged this obligation, and paid this debt for us: Which diſcharge, ſince it was obtained for us by the ſhedding of *Chriſt*'s blood, and the *Scripture* tells us, that *without ſhedding of blood there is no remiſſion of Sins:* And ſince God is graciouſly pleaſed to accept of it for the Debt which we owed to his Juſtice, and to declare himſelf fully pleaſed and contented with it, why it may not properly enough be called *payment* or *ſatiſfaction*, I confeſs, I am not able to underſtand. Men may eternally wrangle about any thing, but what a frivolous contention, what a trifling in ſerious matters, what *barretrie* in *Divinity* is this?

Not that God was *angry* with his *Son*, when he thus *laid on him the iniquities of us all:* No, he was always well pleaſed with him; and never better, than when he *became obedient to the Death, even the Death of the Croſs,* and *bore our Sins in his own body on the Tree.*

Nor yet that our *Saviour* ſuffered the very ſame that the Sinner ſhould have ſuffered, namely, the proper Pains and Torment of the Damned: But that his Obedience and Sufferings were of that value and eſteem with God, and his voluntary Sacrifice of himſelf ſo well-pleaſing to him, that he thereupon entred into a Covenant of Grace and Mercy with Mankind, wherein he hath engaged himſelf to forgive the Sins of thoſe who believe and repent, and to make them partakers of eternal life. And hence the *Blood of Chriſt* which was ſhed for us upon the *Croſs* is called *the Blood of the Covenant*, as being the *Sanction* of that *New Covenant*, into which God is entred with Mankind: and not only the *Sanction* and *Confirmation* of that *Covenant*, but the very *Foundation* of it: For which reaſon the *Cup* in the *Lord's Supper* is called *the New Teſtament*, or, as the word ſhould rather be rendred, *the New Covenant in his Blood, which was ſhed for many for the remiſſion of Sins.* I proceed now to the

II^d. Thing propounded, which was, to ſhew that the Expiation of our Sins was made by the Sufferings of Chriſt, from the *nature* and *intention* of *Expiatory Sacrifices*, both among the *Jews* and *Heathen*; to which the *Death of Chriſt* is in the *New Teſtament* ſo frequently compared, and in point of vertue and efficacy to take away Sin infinitely preferr'd to it.

Now the nature and deſign of *Expiatory Sacrifices* was plainly this: To ſubſtitute one *Living Creature* to ſuffer and die inſtead of another, ſo that what the Sinner deſerv'd to have ſuffered was ſuppoſed to be done to the Sacrifice; that is, it was ſlain to make an atonement for the Sinner.

And though there was no reaſon to hope for any ſuch effect from the Blood of *Bulls*, or *Goats*, or of any other *Living Creatures* that were wont to be offered up in Sacrifice; yet that both *Jews* and *Heathen* did expect and hope for it, is ſo very evident, that it cannot without extreme Ignorance or Obſtinacy be deny'd.

But this expectation, how unreaſonable ſoever, plainly ſhews it to have been the common Apprehenſion of Mankind, in all Ages, that, God would not be appeaſed, nor ſhould Sin be pardoned without Suffering: but yet ſo that Men generally conceived good hopes, that upon the Repentance of Sinners God would accept of a *vicarious* puniſhment; that is, of the Suffering of ſome other in their ſtead. And very probably, as I ſaid before, in compliance with this Apprehenſion of Mankind, and in condeſcenſion to it, as well as for other weighty Reaſons beſt known to the Divine Wiſdom, God was pleaſed to find out ſuch a Sacrifice as ſhould really and effectually procure for them that great Bleſſing of the Forgiveneſs of Sins which they had ſo long hoped for from the multitude of their own Sacrifices.

And the *Apoſtle* to the *Hebrews* doth in a large Diſcourſe ſhew the great vertue and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Chriſt*, to the purpoſe of Remiſſion of Sins, above that of the Sacrifices under the Law: And that the Death of *Chriſt* is really and effectually to our advantage all that which the Sacrifices under the Law were ſuppoſed to be to the Sinner: *But now once*, ſaith the *Apoſtle* here in the *Text*, *in the end of the World, hath he appeared to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himſelf.* This is the great vertue and efficacy of the Sacrifice of *Chriſt*, that whatever was expected from any other Sacrifices, either by *Jews* or *Heathens*, was really effected by this.

This was plainly ſignified by the *Jewiſh Paſſover*, wherein the *Lamb* was ſlain, and the *Sinner* did *eſcape*, and was *paſs'd by*. In alluſion whereto St. *Paul* makes no ſcruple to call *Chriſt* our *Paſſover* or *Paſchal Lamb*, who 1 Cor. 5.7.
was *ſlain* that we might *eſcape*: *Chriſt our Paſſover*, ſays he, *is ſlain*, or *offer'd for us*; that is, He by the gracious appointment of God was ſubſtituted to ſuffer all that in our ſtead which the *Paſchal Lamb* was ſuppoſed to ſuffer for the *Sinner*.

And this was likewiſe ſignified by the Sinner's laying his hand upon the Sacrifice that was to be ſlain, thereby as it were transferring the puniſhment which was due to himſelf upon the Sacrifice that was to be ſlain and offered up. For ſo God tells *Moſes*, that the Sinner, who came to offer an Expiatory Sacrifice ſhould do: *He ſhall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-* Lev. 1. 4.
offering, and it ſhall be accepted for him, to make an Atonement for him. And the *Apoſtle* tells us, that it was an eſtabliſhed Principle in the *Jewiſh*

Religion, that *without ſhedding of blood there was no remiſſion of Sins :* Which plainly ſhews, that they expected this Benefit of the Remiſſion of Sins, from the Blood of their Sacrifices.

And then he tells us, that we are really made partakers of this Benefit by the Blood of *Chriſt*, and by the vertue of his Sacrifice: And again, *Chriſt*, Heb. 9.28. ſays he, *was once offered to bear the Sins of many ;* plainly alluding to the Sacrifices under the Law, which did, as it were, bear the faults of the Sinner.

And that this expreſſion of *Chriſt's* being *offered to bear our Sins*, cannot be meant of his taking away our Sins by his holy Doctrine which was confirmed by his Death, but of his bearing our Sins by way of *imputation*, and by his ſuffering for them in our ſtead, as the Sacrifice was ſuppoſed to do for the Sinner ; This, I ſay, is evident beyond all denial from the oppoſition which follows, after the *Text*, between his *firſt* Appearance and his v. 28. *ſecond* ; *Chriſt*, ſays our *Apoſtle*, *was once offered to bear our Sins ; but unto them that look for him he ſhall appear a ſecond time without Sin unto Salvation.* Why ? Did he not appear the firſt time without Sin ? Yes certainly, as to any inherent guilt ; for the *Scripture* tells us, *he had no Sin.* What then is the meaning of the oppoſition, That at his *firſt* Coming *he bore our Sins*, but at his *ſecond* Coming *he ſhall appear without Sin unto Salvation ?* Theſe words can have no other imaginable ſenſe but this, that at his *firſt* Coming he ſuſtain'd the Perſon of a Sinner and ſuffered inſtead of us ; but his *ſecond* Coming ſhall be upon another account, and *he ſhall appear without Sin unto Salvation* ; that is, not as a *Sacrifice*, but as a *Judge*, to confer the Reward of Eternal Life upon thoſe who are partakers of the benefit of that *Sacrifice* which he offered to God for us *in the days of his Fleſh.* I proceed to the

III. IIId. Thing I propoſed, and which yet remains to be ſpoken to ; namely, to vindicate this Method and *Diſpenſation* of the *Divine Wiſdom* from the *Objections* which are brought againſt it ; and to ſhew that there is nothing in it that is unreaſonable, or any wiſe unworthy of God. I ſhall mention *four Objections* which are commonly urged in this matter, and I think they are all that are conſiderable.

Obj. 1ſt. *Firſt*, That this Method of the *Expiation* of Sin by the Sufferings of *Chriſt*, ſeems to argue ſome defect and want of Goodneſs in God, as if he needed ſome external Motive, and were not of himſelf diſpoſed to forgive Sinners.

To which I think the *Anſwer* is not difficult, namely, that God did not want Goodneſs to have forgiven Sin freely and without any Satisfaction, but his Wiſdom did not think it meet to give encouragement to Sin by too eaſie a forgiveneſs, and without ſome remarkable teſtimony of his ſevere diſpleaſure againſt it: And therefore his greater Goodneſs and Compaſſion to Mankind deviſed this way to ſave the Sinner, without giving the leaſt countenance and encouragement to Sin.

For God to think of ſaving us any way, was exceſſive Goodneſs and Mercy ; but to think of doing it in this way, by ſubſtituting his dearly beloved Son to ſuffer in our ſtead, is a Condeſcenſion ſo very amazing, that if God had not been pleaſed of his own Goodneſs to ſtoop to it, it had almoſt been Blaſphemy in Man to have thought of it, or deſired it.

Obj. 2d. *Secondly*, How can our Sins be ſaid to have been forgiven *freely*, if the Pardon of them was purchaſed at ſo dear a rate and ſo mighty a Price was paid for it ?

In *Anſwer* to this I deſire theſe *two* things may be conſidered. *1ſt.* That it is a wonderful grace and favour of God to admit of this tranſlation of the Puniſhment which was due to us, and to accept of the Sufferings of another in our ſtead, and for our benefit; when he might juſtly have exacted it of us in our own Perſons: So that, even in this reſpect, we are, as St. *Paul* ſays, *juſtified freely by his grace, through the Redemption that is in Jeſus Chriſt:* And *freely* too in reſpect of any neceſſity that lay upon God to forgive us in this or any other way. It was a free act of his Goodneſs to ſave us, even by the Satiſfaction and Sufferings of his own Son. *2dly.* It was in effect freely too, notwithſtanding the mighty Price which was paid for our Redemption. Becauſe this Price was not of our own procuring, but of God's providing; He *found out this Ranſome for us.* And will any Man ſay, that a Prince who prevails with his Son to intercede for the Pardon of a Rebel, yea and to ſuffer ſome puniſhment or to pay a Fine for the obtaining of it, does not in effect and in all equitable and grateful conſtruction forgive him freely?

Thirdly, It is yet further objected, That this ſeems to be more unreaſonable than the ſacrificing of *Beaſts* among the *Jews,* nay, than the ſacrificing of *Men* among the *Heathen,* and even of their *own Sons and Daughters:* Becauſe this is the offering up of the *Son of God,* the moſt innocent and the moſt excellent Perſon that ever was. Obj. 3d.

To which I anſwer, that if we conſider the *manner,* and the *deſign* of it, the thing will appear to be quite otherwiſe.

As to the *manner* of it, God did not command his Son to be ſacrificed, but his Providence permitted the Wickedneſs and Violence of Men to put him to death: and then his Goodneſs and Wiſdom did over-rule this worſt of Actions to the beſt of Ends. And if we conſider the matter aright, how is this any more a reflection upon the Holy Providence of God, than any Enormities and Cruelties which by his permiſſion are daily committed in the World?

And then if we conſider the *End* and *Deſign* of this permiſſion of *Chriſt's* Death, and the application of it to the purpoſe of a general Expiation; we cannot but acknowledge, and even adore the gracious and merciful Deſign of it. For by this means God did at once put an end to that unreaſonable and bloody way of Worſhip, which had been ſo long practic'd in the World: And after this one Sacrifice, which was ſo infinitely dear to God, the benefit of Expiation was not to be expected in any other way; all other Sacrifices being worthleſs and vain in compariſon of this: And it hath ever ſince obtained this effect, of making all other Sacrifices to ceaſe, in all Parts of the World where *Chriſtianity* hath prevailed.

Fourthly, The laſt *Objection* is, the Injuſtice and Cruelty of an Innocent Perſon's ſuffering inſtead of the Offender. Obj. 4th.

To this I anſwer, That they who make ſo great a noiſe with this *Objection* do ſeem to me to give a full and clear *Anſwer* to it themſelves, by acknowledging, as they conſtantly and expreſly do, that our *Saviour* ſuffered all this for our *benefit* and *advantage,* though not in our *place* and *ſtead.* For this, to my apprehenſion, is plainly to give up the Cauſe, unleſs they can ſhew a good reaſon why there is not as much Injuſtice and Cruelty in an Innocent Perſon's ſuffering for the benefit and advantage of a Malefactor, as in his ſuffering in his ſtead: So little do Men, in the heat of diſpute and oppoſition, who are reſolv'd to hold faſt an Opinion in deſpite of Reaſon and good Senſe, conſider, that they do many times in effect, and by neceſſary conſequence, grant the very thing which in expreſs terms they do ſo ſtifly and pertinaciouſly deny.

The truth of the matter is this; there is nothing of Injuſtice or Cruelty in either Caſe; neither in an innocent Perſon's ſuffering for the *benefit* of an Offender, nor in his *ſtead*; ſuppoſing the Suffering to be voluntary: But they have equally the ſame appearance of Injuſtice and Cruelty: Nor can I poſſibly diſcern any reaſon why Injuſtice and Cruelty ſhould be objected in the one Caſe more than in the other, there being every whit as little reaſon why an *Innocent Perſon* ſhould ſuffer for the *benefit* of a *Criminal*, as why he ſhould ſuffer in his *ſtead*. So that I hope this *Objection*, which above all the reſt hath been ſo loudly and ſo invidiouſly urged, hath receiv'd a juſt *Anſwer*.

And I believe, if the matter were ſearch'd to the bottom, all this perverſe contention, about our Saviour's ſuffering for our *benefit* but not in our *ſtead*, will ſignifie juſt nothing. For if *Chriſt* died for our *benefit* ſo as ſome way or other, by vertue of his Death and Sufferings, to ſave us from the wrath of God and to procure our eſcape from eternal Death; this, for ought I know, is all that any body means by his dying in our *ſtead*. For he that dies with an intention to do that *benefit* to another as to ſave him from Death, doth certainly to all intents and purpoſes dye in his place and *ſtead*.

And if they will grant this to be their meaning, the Controverſie is at an end; and both ſides are agreed in the thing, and do only differ in the phraſe and manner of expreſſion: which is to ſeek a quarrel and an occaſion of difference where there is no real ground for it: a thing which ought to be very far from reaſonable and peaceable Minds.

For the *Socinians* ſay, that our *Saviour's* voluntary Obedience and Sufferings did procure his Exaltation at the right hand of God, and Power and Authority to forgive Sins, and to give eternal Life to as many as he pleaſed: So that they grant that his Obedience and Sufferings, in the meritorious conſequence of them, do redound to our *Benefit* and advantage as much as we pretend and ſay they do; only they are loth in expreſs terms to acknowledge that *Chriſt* died in our *ſtead*: And this, for no other reaſon, that I can imagine, but becauſe they have denied it ſo often and ſo long.

But I appeal to the Ingenuity of our *Adverſaries*, whether this do not in the laſt iſſue come all to one; and be not, on their part, a mere Controverſie about words; For ſuppoſe a Malefactor condemned to ſome grievous puniſhment, and the King's Son to ſave him from it is contented to ſubmit to great diſgrace and ſufferings: In reward of which Sufferings the King takes his Son into his Throne and ſets him at his own right hand, and gives him power to pardon this Malefactor, and upon a fitting Submiſſion and Repentance to advance him to honour: Will not any Man in this Caſe allow, that the King's Son ſuffered inſtead of this Malefactour, and ſmile at any Man that ſhall be ſo nice as to grant that indeed he *ſuffered* for him, but yet to deny that he was *puniſh'd* for him, to allow that he bore the inconvenience of his faults, but yet obſtinately to ſtand it out that the faults of this Malefactour were not laid upon him, or in any wiſe ſo imputed to him that he can be ſaid to have ſuffered in his ſtead? This is juſt the Caſe, and the difference in reality, and in the laſt reſult of things is nothing but words.

Thus far have I tried your patience in a contentious Argument; in which I take no pleaſure, but yet ſhall be glad if I may be ſo happy as by any thing that hath been ſaid to contribute towards the putting an end to ſo unhappy a Controverſie, which hath troubled the World ſo long, and raiſed ſuch a duſt that very few have been able to ſee clearly through it.

However I cannot diſmiſs this Argument without making ſome uſeful but very ſhort reflection upon this great Doctrine of our Religion, namely, That the Son of God being made a Sacrifice for us, and expoſed to ſuch bitter Sufferings and ſo cruel a Death for the Expiation of our Sins, ſhould create in us the greateſt dread and deteſtation of Sin, and for ever deter us from all wilful tranſgreſſion and diſobedience. For if the guilt of our Sins was done away upon ſuch hard terms and coſt the dearly beloved Son of God ſo much ſweat and blood, then ſurely we ought to take great heed how by our renewed Provocations we renew his Paſſion, and do what in us lies to *crucifie to our ſelves the Son of God afreſh, and to put him to an open ſhame.*

If God did ſo terribly afflict the dearly beloved of his Soul for our ſakes; if the Son of God was ſo grievouſly *wounded for our tranſgreſſions,* and ſo ſorely *bruiſed for our iniquities:* If ſo fearful a Storm of Vengeance fell upon the moſt innocent Perſon that ever was for our Sins, then we have reaſon to take that kind and merciful admonition of the Son of God to Sinners, to *ſin no more, leſt a worſe thing,* if it be poſſible, *come upon* our ſelves.

In this Diſpenſation of God's Grace and Mercy to Mankind, by the Death of his Son, God ſeems to have gone to the very extremity of things, and almoſt further than Goodneſs and Juſtice will well admit; to afflict Innocency it ſelf to ſave the Guilty: And if herein God hath expreſſed his hatred of Sin in ſuch a wonderful way of Love and Kindneſs to the Sons of Men as looks almoſt like hatred of Innocency and his own Son: This ought in all ingenuity and gratitude to our gracious Redeemer, who *was made a curſe for us,* and *loved us* to that degree as to *waſh us from our Sins in his own Blood:* I ſay, This ought to beget in us a greater diſpleaſure againſt Sin, and a more perfect deteſtation of it, than if we had ſuffered the puniſhment due to it, in our own Perſons: For in this Caſe, we could only have been diſpleaſed at our Selves and our Sins as the juſt Cauſe of our Sufferings: but in the other, we ought to hate Sin as the unhappy occaſion of the ſaddeſt Misfortune and ſoreſt Calamities to the *beſt Man* that ever was, and to our *beſt Friend,* for our Sins and for our Sakes.

Since then the *Son of God* hath ſo graciouſly condeſcended to be *made in all things* like unto us, *Sin only excepted;* let us aſpire as much as is poſſible, to become like to Him: Above all, let us hate and avoid Sin as the only thing in which the Son of God would have no part with us, though he was contented to ſuffer ſuch bitter things to ſave us from the Defilement and Dominion of it, from the Puniſhment and all the diſmal conſequences of it.

He had no Sin, but God was pleaſed to *lay upon him the iniquities of us all,* and *to make his Soul an offering for Sin,* and to permit all that to be done to Him which was due to us: He was contented to be ſacrificed once for all Mankind, that Men might for ever ceaſe from that inhuman and ineffectual way of ſacrificing one another, whereby inſtead of *expiating* their guilt they did inflame it, and by thinking to make Atonement for their Sins they did in truth add to the number and heinouſneſs of them.

And let us likewiſe learn from this admirable Pattern, to pity thoſe that are in miſery, as *Chriſt* alſo hath pitied us; and to *ſave them that are ready to periſh,* for His ſake who *came to ſeek and to ſave us that were loſt.*

Let us, upon all occaſions, be ready to open our bowels of Compaſſion towards the Poor; in a thankful imitation of his Grace and Goodneſs who for our ſakes choſe to be a Beggar, that we for his ſake might not deſpiſe the Poor, but might have a tender regard and compaſſion to thoſe whoſe Condition in this World does ſo nearly reſemble that in which the *Son of God* thought it fitteſt for him to appear when he was pleaſed to become *Man*.

In a word, Let us in the whole courſe, and in all the actions of our lives, *ſhew forth the Vertues of Him who hath called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*; and *hath raiſed up a mighty Salvation for us*, that *being delivered from all our* ſpiritual *Enemies*, from Sin and all the Powers of Darkneſs, we might *ſerve him* who hath *ſaved us*; *walking in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him, all the days of our lives*.

Now, *to him that ſitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb that was ſlain: To God even our Father, and to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the firſt begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the Earth: Unto him, who hath loved us, and waſhed from our Sins in his own Blood:* and whilſt we were *Enemies* to Him, loved us at ſuch a rate as never any Man did his *Friend*: To *Him*, who became Man, that he might bring us to God; and aſſumed our frail and mortal Nature, that he might cloath us with Immortality and Life: To *Him*, who was pleaſed to dwell and live amongſt us, that he might teach us how to live: To *Him*, *who died for our Sins, and roſe again for our Juſtification, and lives for ever to make Interceſſion for us:* To *Him*, be Glory and Dominion, Thankſgiving and Praiſe to Eternal Ages. *Amen.*

SER.

SERMON XLVIII.

Concerning the
Unity of the Divine Nature, and the B. Trinity, &c.

1 Tim. II. 5.

For there is one God.

THE Particle *for* leads us to the conſideration of the Context and Occaſion of theſe words, which in ſhort is this. The deſign of this *Epiſtle* is to direct *Timothy*, to whom St. *Paul* had committed the Government of the Church of *Epheſus*, how he ought to demean himſelf in that great and weighty Charge. And at the beginning of this *Chapter* he gives direction concerning *Publick Prayers* in the Church; that *Prayers* and *Thankſgiving be made for all Men*, and for all Ranks and Orders of Men; eſpecially for *Kings and all that are in Authority, that under them* Chriſtians *might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty.*

And this he tells us was very ſuitable to the *Chriſtian* Religion, by which God deſign'd the Salvation of Mankind; and therefore it muſt needs be very acceptable to him that we ſhould offer up *Prayers* and *Thankſgivings* to him in behalf of *all Men: For this*, ſaith the *Apoſtle*, *is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Saviour, who will have all Men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth.*

And then it follows in the next words, *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a Ranſom for all:* As if he had ſaid, this univerſal Charity of *Chriſtians*, in *praying for all Men*, muſt needs be very acceptable to *Him* to whom we put up our Prayers, *God the Father*, who ſent his Son for the Salvation of *all Men*: And to *Him* likewiſe by whom we offer up our Prayers to God, and is among us *Chriſtians* the only *Mediator between God and Men*, in vertue of that Price and Ranſom which he paid for the Redemption of all Mankind; I ſay, for this reaſon it muſt needs be very acceptable to Him that we ſhould pray for all Men, becauſe he died for all Men, and now that he is in Heaven at the right hand of God intercedes with him for the Salvation of thoſe for whom he died: *There is One God, and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Chriſt Jeſus, who gave himſelf a Ranſom for all.*

Which words, though they be brought in to prove more immediately, that it is *acceptable to God our Saviour*, that we ſhould put up Prayers to Him *for all Men*, becauſe he deſires the Salvation of all Men, and hath ſent his *Son* to purchaſe the Salvation of all Men by the Sacrifice of himſelf; and in virtue of that Sacrifice to be the only *Mediator* between God and us: I ſay, though this be the immediate ſcope and deſign of theſe words, yet they are likewiſe a direction to us, unto whom we ought to addreſs our Prayers, namely, to *God*; and by whoſe *mediation* and Interceſſion we ought to put up our Prayers to God the *Father*, namely, by his *Son Jeſus Chriſt*, who is conſtituted the only *Mediator between God and Men.*

There are ſeveral *Propoſitions* contained in this and the following *verſe*; 1 Cor. 8. 4. but I ſhall at preſent confine my ſelf to the *firſt*, namely, That *there is One God*, that is, *but One*, as St. *Paul* elſewhere expreſſeth it, *There is none other God but One*. And *Moſes* lays this as the Foundation of the *Natural* Law, Deut. 4. 35. as well as of the *Jewiſh* Religion, *The Lord he is One God, and there is none beſides him*, that is, beſides *Jehovah*, whom the People of *Iſrael* did worſhip as the only true God. And this the Prophet *Iſaiah* perpetually declares in Iſai. 44. 6. oppoſition to the *Polytheiſm* and variety of Gods among the *Heathen. I am the* v. 8. *firſt, and I am the laſt, and beſides me there is no God.* And again, *Is there any God beſides me? there is no God, I know not any:* He, who hath an infinite knowledge and knows all things, knows no other God. And our *B. Saviour* makes this the *Fundamental Article* of all Religion, and the knowledge of it neceſſary to every Man's Salvation; *This*, ſays *He*, *is life eternal, to know thee the only true God.*

The *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is a *Notion* wherein the greateſt and the wiſeſt part of Mankind did always agree, and therefore may reaſonably be preſumed to be either *natural*, or to have ſprung from ſome *Original Tradition* delivered down to us from the *firſt Parents* of Mankind: I mean, that there is *One Supreme Being*, the *Author* and *Cauſe* of all things, whom the moſt ancient of the *Heathen Poets* commonly called *the Father of Gods and Men.* And thus *Ariſtotle* in his *Metaphyſicks* defines God, *the eternal and moſt excellent*, or *beſt of all Living Beings*. And this *Notion*, of *One Supreme Being*, agrees very well with that exact Harmony which appears in the Frame and Government of the World, in which we ſee all things conſpiring to one End, and continuing in one uniform Order and Courſe; which cannot reaſonably be aſcribed to any other but a conſtant and uniform Cauſe; and which to a conſidering Man does plainly ſhew, that all things are made and governed by that *One* powerful *Principle*, and great and wiſe *Mind* which we call *God*.

But although the generality of Mankind had a *Notion* of *One Supreme God*, yet the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen* plainly ſhews, that this *Notion*, in proceſs of time, was greatly degenerated, and corrupted into an apprehenſion of a *Plurality* of *Gods*; though in reaſon it is evident enough, that there can be no more Gods than *One*; and that One, who is of infinite Perfection, is as ſufficient to all purpoſes whatſoever, as ten thouſand Deities, if they were poſſible, could poſſibly be; as I ſhall ſhew in the following Diſcourſe.

Now this multitude of *Deities*; which the fond Superſtition and vain Imagination of Men had formed to themſelves, were by the *Wiſer* ſort, who being forced to comply with the Follies of the People endeavoured to make the beſt of them, ſuppoſed to be either *Parts* of the *Univerſe* which the *Egyptians*, as *Plutarch* tells us, thought to be the ſame with *God*; but then the more conſiderable Parts of the *Univerſe* they parcelled out into ſeveral *Deities*; and as the *Ocean* hath ſeveral *Names*, according to the ſeveral *Coaſts* and *Countries* by which it paſſeth; ſo they gave ſeveral *Names* to this *One Deity* according to the ſeveral Parts of the World which ſeveral Nations made the Objects of their Worſhip.

Or elſe, they adored the ſeveral Perfections and Powers of the *One Supreme God* under ſeveral *Names* and *Titles*, with regard to the various *Bleſſings* and *Benefits* which they thought they received from *Him*.

Thus the *Indian* Philoſophers, the *Brachmans*, are ſaid to have worſhipped the *Sun* as the *Supreme Deity*; and he certainly is the moſt *Worſhipful* of all ſenſible Beings, and bids faireſt for a *Deity*; eſpecially if he was, as they ſuppoſed, animated by a *Spirit* endued with Knowledge and Underſtanding. And if a Man who had been bred in a dark Cave, ſhould all on the ſudden be brought out at Noon-day to behold this viſible World; after he had viewed and conſider'd it a while, he would in all probability pitch upon the *Sun* as the moſt likely, of all the things he had ſeen, to be a *Deity*. For if ſuch a Man had any Notion of *a God*, and were to chuſe one upon ſight, he would without diſpute fix upon the *Sun*, and fall down before Him and worſhip Him.

And *Macrobius* manageth this as his main *Plea* for the *Idolatry* of the *Heathen*; that under all the ſeveral *Names* of their *Gods* they Worſhipped the *Sun*: And this diverſity of *Names* was but a more diſtinct conception and acknowledgment of the many Bleſſings and Advantages which Mankind receiv'd from Him, and a more particular and expreſs Adoration of the ſeveral *Powers* and *Perfections* which were in *Him*. And this was the very beſt defence, and all the tolerable ſenſe which the *Wiſeſt* among the *Heathen* could make of the *multitude* of their *Deities*.

And yet whilſt they generally owned *One Supreme Being* that was the *Principle* and *Original* of all things, they worſhipped ſeveral *ſubordinate Deities* as really diſtinct from one another. Some of theſe they fancied to be *ſuperiour* to the reſt and to have their reſidence in *Heaven*; by which *Marſilius Ficinus* ſuppoſes *Plato* to mean no more but the *Chief* of the *Angels*. Theſe were called Θεοὶ, *Dii Superi* and *Dii Cœleſtes*, *ſuperior* and *heavenly Gods*: The *Scripture* terms them *the Hoſt of Heaven*, meaning the *Sun*, *Moon* and *Stars*, which they ſuppoſed to be animated, or at leaſt, to be inhabited by *Angels*, or glorious Spirits, whom they called *Gods*.

Other of their *Deities* were accounted much *inferior* to theſe, being ſuppoſed to be the *Souls* of their deceaſed *Heroes*; who for their great and worthy Deeds, when they lived upon Earth, were ſuppoſed after Death to be tranſlated into the number of their *Gods*. And theſe were called *Semidei* and *Deaſtri*, that is, *half Gods* and *a ſort of Gods*: And as the other were *Celeſtial*, ſo theſe were Δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι, a kind of *Terreſtrial* Spirits that were *Preſidents* and *Procurators* of Human Affairs here below; that is, a middle ſort of *Divine Powers* that were *Mediators* and *Agents* between *God* and *Men*, and did carry the Prayers and Supplications of Men to God, and bring down the Commands and Bleſſings of God to Men.

But in the midſt of all this *Crowd* and *Confuſion* of *Deities*, and the various *Superſtitions* about them, the Wiſer *Heathen*, as *Thales*, *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, *Tully*, *Plutarch*, and others, preſerved a true Notion of *One Supreme God*, whom they defined an *infinite Spirit*, *pure from all Matter and free from all Imperfection*: And all the variety of their *Worſhip* was, as they pretended in excuſe of it, but a more particular owning of the various repreſentations of the *Divine* Power and Excellencies which manifeſted themſelves in the World, and of the ſeveral communications of Bleſſings and Favours by *them* imparted to *Men*: and *Tertullian* obſerves, that even when *Idolatry* had very much obſcur'd the Glory of the *Sovereign Deity*, yet the greater part of Mankind did ſtill in their common *Forms* of *Speech* appropriate the Name of *God* in a more eſpecial and peculiar manner to *One*, ſaying, *If God grant*, *If God pleaſe*, and the like.

Adverſus Marcionem, l. 1. c. 10.

So that there is ſufficient ground to believe, that the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, or the Notion of *One Supreme God*, Creator and Governour of the World, was the Primitive and general belief of Mankind: And that *Polytheiſm* and *Idolatry* were a corruption and degeneracy from the *Original*

Notion which Mankind had concerning *God*; as the *Scripture Hiſtory* doth declare and teſtifie.

And this account which I have given of the *Heathen Idolatry* doth by no means excuſe it. For whatever may be ſaid by way of extenuation in behalf of ſome few of the wiſer and more devout among them, the generality were groſly guilty both of believing *more Gods*, and of worſhipping *falſe Gods*.

And this muſt needs be a very great Crime, ſince the *Scripture* every where declares God to be particularly *jealous* in this Caſe, and that *he will not give his glory to another, nor his praiſe to graven Images.* Nay, we may not ſo much as make uſe of ſenſible Images to put us in mind of God, leſt devout Ignorance, ſeeing the Worſhip which wiſe Men paid towards an *Idol*, ſhould be drawn to terminate their Worſhip there, as being the very *Deity* it ſelf; which was certainly the Caſe of the greateſt part of the *Heathen* World.

And ſurely thoſe *Chriſtians* are in no leſs danger of *Idolatry*, who pay a Veneration to *Images* by *kneeling down* and *praying* before them; and in this they are much more inexcuſable, becauſe they offend againſt a much clearer Light; and yet when they go about to juſtifie this Practice are able to bring no other nor better *Pleas* for themſelves than the *Heathen* did for their worſhipping of *Images*, and for praying to their *inferior Deities*, whom they looked upon as *Mediators* between the *Gods* in Heaven and *Men* upon Earth.

There is but one *Objection*, that I know of, againſt the general Conſent of Mankind concerning the *Unity of God*; and it is this, That there was an ancient Doctrine of ſome of the moſt ancient Nations, that there were *two Firſt Cauſes* or *Principles* of all things; the *one* the cauſe of all *Good*, and the *other* of all the *Evil* that is in the World: The reaſon whereof ſeems to have been, that they could not apprehend how things of ſo contrary nature, as *Good* and *Evil*, could proceed from *one* and the ſame *Cauſe*.

And theſe *two Principles* in ſeveral Nations were called by ſeveral Names. *Plutarch* ſays, that among the *Greeks* the *Good Principle* was called *God*, and the *Evil Principle* Δαίμων, or the *Devil.* In conformity to which ancient *Tradition* the *Manichees*, a *Sect* which called themſelves *Chriſtians*, did advance *two Principles*, the *one* infinitely *Good*, which they ſuppoſed to be the *Original Cauſe* of all the *good* which is in the World; the *other* infinitely *Evil*, to which they aſcribed all the *evils* that are in the World.

But all this is very plainly a corruption of a much more ancient *Tradition* concerning that *old Serpent* the *Devil*, the Head of the *fallen Angels*, who by tempting our *Firſt Parents* to tranſgreſs a poſitive and expreſs Law of God brought *Sin* firſt into the World and all the *Evils* conſequent upon it; of which the *Scripture* gives us a moſt expreſs and particular account.

And as to the *Notion* of a *Being infinitely Evil* into which this *Tradition* was corrupted, after *Idolatry* had prevail'd in the World, beſides that it is a Contradiction, it would likewiſe be to no purpoſe to aſſert *two* oppoſite *Principles* of *infinite*, that is, of *equal* Force and Power, for *two Infinites* muſt of neceſſity be equal to one another; becauſe nothing can be more or greater than Infinite, and therefore if *two* infinite Beings were poſſible they would certainly be equal, and could not be otherwiſe.

Now that the Notion of a *Principle infinitely Evil* is a Contradiction will be very plain, if we conſider that what is *infinitely Evil* muſt in ſtrict Reaſoning, and by neceſſary Conſequence, be infinitely imperfect; and therefore infinitely weak, and for that reaſon, though never ſo malicious and miſchievous, yet being infinitely weak and fooliſh, could never be in a capacity either to contrive miſchief or to execute it.

But if it ſhould be admitted, that a Being infinitely miſchievous could be infinitely knowing and powerful, yet it could effect no Evil; becauſe the oppoſite *Principle* of *infinite Goodneſs*, being alſo infinitely Wiſe and Powerful, they would tye up one anothers's hands. So that upon this ſuppoſition the *Notion of a Deity* muſt ſignifie juſt nothing, becauſe by vertue of the eternal oppoſition and equal conflict of theſe *two Principles* they would keep one another at a perpetual *Baye*; and being juſt an equal Match to one another, the *one* having as much mind and power to do *good* as the *other* to do *evil*, inſtead of being *two Deities* they would be but *two Idols*, able to do neither *good* nor *evil*.

And having, I hope, now ſufficiently clear'd this *Objection*, I ſhall proceed to ſhew how agreeable this *Principle*, that *there is but one God*, is to the common Reaſon of Mankind, and to the cleareſt and moſt eſſential Notions which we have of God: And this will appear theſe *two* ways.

Firſt, By conſidering the moſt eſſential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature.

Secondly, From the repugnancy and impoſſibility, the great abſurdity and inconvenience of ſuppoſing more Gods than One.

Firſt, By conſidering the moſt eſſential *Perfections* of the Divine Nature. *Abſolute Perfection* which we aſcribe to God, as the moſt eſſential Notion which Mankind hath always had concerning Him, does neceſſarily ſuppoſe *Unity*; becauſe this is eſſential to the Notion of a Being that is *abſolutely Perfect*, that all Perfection meets and is united in ſuch a Being: But to imagine more Gods, and ſome Perfections to be in one and ſome in another, does deſtroy the moſt *eſſential* Notion which Men have of God, namely, that *He* is a *Being abſolutely Perfect*, that is, as perfect as is poſſible: Now to ſuppoſe ſome Perfections in one God which are not in another, is to ſuppoſe ſome poſſible Perfection to be wanting in God, which is a Contradiction to the moſt natural and the moſt eaſie Notion which all Men have of God, that he is a Being in whom all Perfections do meet and are united: But if we ſuppoſe more Gods, each of which hath all Perfections united in Him, then all but one would be ſuperfluous and needleſs; and therefore by juſt and neceſſary conſequence not only *may*, but of neceſſity *muſt* be ſuppoſed not to be; ſince *neceſſary exiſtence* is *eſſential* to the *Deity*; and therefore if *but One God* be neceſſary, there can be no more.

Secondly, From the *repugnancy* and *impoſſibility*, the great *abſurdity* and *inconvenience* of the contrary. For ſuppoſe there were more *Gods*, *two* for example; and if there may be *two* there may be a *million*, for we can ſtop no where: I ſay, ſuppoſe *two Gods*; either theſe *two* would be in all Perfections equal and alike, or unequal and unlike: If equal and alike in all things then, as I ſaid before, one of them would be needleſs and ſuperfluous, and if *one* why not as well the *other*? they being ſuppoſed to be in all things perfectly alike; and then there would be no neceſſity at all of the being of a God; and yet it is granted on all hands, that *neceſſary exiſtence* is eſſential to the Notion of a *God*: But if they be unequal, that is, *one* of them inferior to and leſs perfect than the *other*, that which is inferior and leſs perfect could not be God, becauſe he would not have all perfection. So that which way ſoever we turn the thing and look upon it, the Notion of more Gods than One is by its own repugnancy and ſelf-contradiction deſtructive of it ſelf.

Before I come to apply this *Doctrine* of the *Unity of God*, I muſt not paſs by a very conſiderable *Difficulty*, which will moſt certainly ariſe in every

Man's Mind, without taking particular notice of it, and endeavouring to remove it, if I can. And it is the *Doctrine* of the *B. Trinity*, or of *three* real *Differences* or *diſtinct Perſons* in *One* and the ſame *Divine Nature.*

And though this be not a *Difficulty* peculiar only to the *Chriſtian* Religion, as by the generality of thoſe who urge this *Objection* againſt *Chriſtians* hath been inconſiderately thought; for it is certain, that long before *Chriſtianity* appeared in the World, there was a very ancient *Tradition*, both among *Jews* and *Heathen*, concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Diſtinctions* in the Divine Nature, very nearly reſembling the *Chriſtian* Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as I ſhall have occaſion more fully to ſhew by and by: Yet it cannot be deny'd, but that this *Difficulty* doth in a more eſpecial manner affect the *Chriſtian* Religion; the generality of *Chriſtians*, who do moſt firmly believe the *Trinity*, believing likewiſe at the ſame time, more ſtedfaſtly if it be poſſible, 1 Cor. 8. 6. *that there is but One God. To us*, ſaith St. *Paul*, that is, *to us Chriſtians, there is but One God.* But how can this poſſibly conſiſt with the common *Doctrine* of *Chriſtians* concerning the *Trinity*, God the *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*, to each of whom they Attribute, as they verily believe the *Scripture* does, the moſt incommunicable *Properties* and *Perfections* of the *Divine Nature?* And what is this leſs in effect than to ſay, *That there are three Gods?*

For the clearing of this *Difficulty* I ſhall, with all the brevity I can, offer theſe following *Conſiderations*; which I hope, to an impartial and unprejudiced Judgment, will de ſufficient to remove it, or at leaſt to break the main force and ſtrength of it.

I. I. I deſire it may be well conſider'd, that there is a wide difference between the nice *Speculations* of the *Schools*, beyond what is revealed in *Scripture*, concerning the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, and what the *Scripture only* teaches and aſſerts concerning this *Myſtery*. For it is not to be deny'd but that the *Schoolmen*, who abounded in wit and leiſure, though very few among them had either exact skill in the *H. Scriptures*, or in *Eccleſiaſtical Antiquity* and the *Writings* of the *ancient Fathers* of the *Chriſtian* Church: I ſay, it cannot be deny'd but that theſe *Speculative* and very acute Men, who wrought a great part of their *Divinity* out of their own Brains, as *Spiders* do *Cobwebs* out of their own bowels, have ſtarted a thouſand *ſubtleties* about this *Myſtery*, ſuch as no *Chriſtian* is bound to trouble his head withal; much leſs is it neceſſary for him to underſtand thoſe *niceties* which we may reaſonably preſume that they who talk of them did themſelves never throughly underſtand; and leaſt of all is it neceſſary to believe them. The modeſty of *Chriſtians* is contented in *Divine Myſteries* to know what God hath thought fit to reveal concerning them, and hath no curioſity to be *wiſe above that which is written.* It is enough to believe what God ſays concerning theſe matters; and if any Man will venture to ſay more, every other Man ſurely is at his liberty to believe as he ſees reaſon.

II. II. I deſire it may in the next place be conſider'd, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, even as it is aſſerted in *Scripture*, is acknowledged by us to be ſtill a great *Myſtery*, and ſo imperfectly revealed as to be in a great meaſure incomprehenſible by Human Reaſon. And therefore though ſome learned and judicious Men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great *Myſtery* by the ſtrength of *Reaſon*, yet I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of ſuch an Attempt, and mine own inſufficiency for it.

All that I ever deſigned upon this Argument was to make out the credibility of the thing from the Authority of the *H. Scriptures*, without deſcending to a more particular explication of it than the *Scripture* hath given us; leſt by endeavouring to lay the *Difficulties* which are already ſtarted about it new ones ſhould be raiſed, and ſuch as may perhaps be much harder to be removed than thoſe which we have now to grapple withal. And this I hope I have in ſome meaſure done in one of the former *Diſcourſes*. *Ser.* XLIV. Nor indeed do I ſee that it is any ways neceſſary to do more; it being ſufficient that God hath declared what he thought fit in this matter, and that we do firmly believe what he ſays concerning it to be true, though we do not perfectly comprehend the meaning of all that he hath ſaid about it.

For in this and the like Caſes I take an *Implicit Faith* to be very commendable, that is, to believe whatever we are ſufficiently aſſured God hath reavealed, though we do not fully underſtand his meaning in ſuch a Revelation. And thus every Man who believes the *H. Scriptures* to be a truly *Divine* Revelation does *implicitly* believe a great part of the *Prophetical* Books of *Scripture* and ſeveral obſcure expreſſions in thoſe Books, though he do not particularly underſtand the meaning of all the Predictions and Expreſſions contained in them. In like manner, there are certainly a great many very good *Chriſtians* who do not believe and comprehend the Myſteries of Faith nicely enough to approve themſelves to a *Scolaſtical* and Magiſterial *Judge* of *Controverſies*, who yet if they do heartily embrace the *Doctrines* which are clearly revealed in *Scripture* and live up to the plain *Precepts* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, will, I doubt, not be very well approved by the great and Juſt, and by the *infallibly* Infallible Judge of the World.

III. Let it be further conſidered, That though neither the word *Trinity*, III. nor perhaps *Perſon*, in the ſenſe in which it is uſed by *Divines* when they treat of this *Myſtery*, be any where to be met with in *Scripture*; yet it cannot be deny'd but that *Three* are there ſpoken of by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*, in whoſe Name every *Chriſtian* is baptiz'd, and to each of whom the higheſt *Titles* and *Properties* of *God* are in *Scripture* attributed: And theſe three are ſpoken of with as much diſtinction from one another as we uſe to ſpeak of *three* ſeveral Perſons.

So that though the word *Trinity* be not found in *Scripture*, yet theſe *Three* are there expreſly and frequently mention'd; and a *Trinity* is nothing but *three* of any thing. And ſo likewiſe though the word *Perſon* be not there expreſly applied to *Father*, *Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*; yet it will be very hard to find a more convenient word whereby to expreſs the diſtinction of theſe *Three*. For which reaſon I could never yet ſee any juſt cauſe to quarrel at this *term*. For ſince the *H. Spirit* of God in *Scripture* hath thought fit in ſpeaking of theſe *Three* to diſtinguiſh them from one another, as we uſe in common ſpeech to diſtinguiſh *three* ſeveral *Perſons*, I cannot ſee any reaſon why, in the explication of this *Myſtery* which purely depends upon *Divine Revelation*, we ſhould not ſpeak of it in the ſame manner as the *Scripture* doth: And though the word *Perſon* is now become a *Term of Art*, I ſee no cauſe why we ſhould decline it, ſo long as we mean by it neither more nor leſs than what the *Scripture* ſays in other Words.

IV. It deſerves further to be conſidered, That there hath been a very IV. *ancient Tradition* concerning *three* real *Differences* or *Diſtinctions* in the *Divine Nature*; and theſe, as I ſaid before, very nearly reſembling the *Chriſtian* Doctrine of the *Trinity*.

Whence this *Tradition* had its original is not eaſie upon good and certain grounds to ſay; but certain it is that the *Jews* anciently had this *Notion:* And that they did diſtinguiſh the *Word of God*, and *the H Spirit of God*, from *Him* who was *abſolutely* called *God*, and whom they looked upon as the *Firſt Principle* of all things; as is plain from *Philo Judæus*, and *Moſes Nachmanides*, and others cited by the Learned *Grotius* in his incomparable Book of the *Truth of the Chriſtian Religion.* L. 5.

And among the *Heathen*, *Plato*, who probably enough might have this *Notion* from the *Jews*, did make *three Diſtinctions* in the *Deity* by the Names of *Eſſential Goodneſs*, and *Mind*, and *Spirit.*

So that whatever Objections this matter may be liable to, it is not ſo peculiar a *Doctrine* of the *Chriſtian* Religion as many have imagined, though it is revealed by it with much more clearneſs and certainty: And conſequently, neither the *Jews* nor *Plato* have any reaſon to object it to us *Chriſtians*; eſpecially ſince *they* pretend no other ground for it but either their own *Reaſon*, or an *ancient Tradition* from their *Fathers:* whereas we *Chriſtians* do appeal to expreſs *Divine Revelation* for what we believe in this matter, and do believe it ſingly upon that account.

V. V. It is beſides very conſiderable, That the *Scriptures* do deliver this Doctrine of the *Trinity* without any manner of doubt or queſtion concerning the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature:* And not only ſo, but do moſt ſtedfaſtly and conſtantly aſſert that there is but *One God*: And in thoſe very *Texts*, in which theſe *three Differences* are mentioned, the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* is expreſly aſſerted; as where St. *John* makes mention of the *Father*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, the *Unity* of theſe *Three* is likewiſe affirmed, *There are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit; and theſe Three are One.*

VI. VI. It is yet further conſiderable, That from this *Myſtery*, as delivered in *Scripture*, a Plurality of Gods cannot be inferr'd without making the *Scripture* groſly to contradict it ſelf; which I charitably ſuppoſe the *Socinians* would be as loath to admit as we our ſelves are. And if either *Councils*, or *Fathers*, or *Schoolmen*, have ſo explain'd this *Myſtery* as to give any juſt ground, or ſo much as a plauſible colour for ſuch an Inference, let the blame fall where it is due, and let it not be charged on the *H. Scriptures*; but rather, as the *Apoſtle* ſays in another Caſe, *Let God be true, and every Man a liar.*

VII. VII*thly* and *Laſtly*, I deſire it may be conſider'd, That it is not repugnant to Reaſon to believe ſome things which are incomprehenſible by our Reaſon; provided that we have ſufficient ground and reaſon for the belief of them: Eſpecially if they be concerning *God*, who is in his Nature *Incomprehenſible*; and we be well aſſured that he hath revealed them. And therefore it ought not to offend us that theſe *Differences* in the *Deity* are *incomprehenſible* by our finite underſtandings; becauſe the *Divine Nature* it ſelf is ſo, and yet the belief of *that* is the Foundation of all Religion.

There are a great many things in *Nature* which we cannot comprehend how they either are, or can be: As the *Continuity of Matter*, that is, how the parts of it do hang ſo faſt together, that they are many times very hard to be parted; and yet we are ſure that it is ſo, becauſe we ſee it every day. So likewiſe how the ſmall *Seeds* of things contain the whole *Form* and *Nature* of the things from which they proceed and into which by degrees they grow; and yet we plainly ſee this every year.

There are many things likewiſe in our *Selves*, which no Man is able in any meaſure to comprehend, as to the manner how they are done and performed: As the *vital union* of *Soul* and *Body:* Who can imagine by what device or means a *Spirit* comes to be ſo cloſely united and ſo firmly link'd to a *material Body*, that they are not to be parted without great force and violence offer'd to Nature? The like may be ſaid of the operations of our ſeveral *Faculties* of *Senſe* and *Imagination*, of *Memory* and *Reaſon*, and eſpecially of the *Liberty* of our *Wills:* And yet we certainly find all theſe *Faculties* in our ſelves, though we cannot either comprehend or explain the particular manner in which the ſeveral Operations of them are performed.

And if we cannot comprehend the manner of thoſe Operations which we plainly perceive and feel to be in our *Selves*, much leſs can we expect to comprehend things without us; and leaſt of all can we pretend to comprehend the infinite *Nature* and *Perfections* of *God*, and every thing belonging to Him. For God himſelf is certainly the greateſt *Myſtery* of all other, and acknowledged by Mankind to be in his Nature, and in the particular manner of his Exiſtence, incomprehenſible by Human Underſtanding. And the reaſon of this is very evident, becauſe God is infinite, and our knowledge and underſtanding is but finite: And yet no ſober Man ever thought this a good reaſon to call the Being of God in queſtion.

The ſame may be ſaid of God's certain knowledge of future Contingencies which depend upon the uncertain Wills of free Agents: It being utterly inconceiveable how any Underſtanding, how large and perfect ſoever, can certainly know beforehand that which depends upon the *free Will* of another, which is an arbitrary and uncertain Cauſe.

And yet the *Scripture* doth not only attribute this Foreknowledge to God, but gives us alſo plain Inſtances of God's foretelling ſuch things, many Ages before it happen'd, as could not come to paſs but by the Sins of Men, in which we are ſure that God can have no hand; though nothing can happen without his permiſſion: Such was that moſt memorable Event of the Death of *Chriſt*, who, as the *Scripture* tells us, was *by wicked hands crucified and ſlain*; and yet even *this* is ſaid to have happened *according to the determinate foreknowledge of God*, and was punctually foretold by Him ſome hundreds of years before. Nay, the *Scripture* doth not only aſcribe this power and perfection to the *Divine* Knowledge, but *natural Reaſon* hath been forced to acknowledge it, as we may ſee in ſome of the wiſeſt of the *Philoſophers*. And yet it would puzzle the greateſt *Philoſopher* that ever was, to give any tolerable account how any Knowledge whatſoever can certainly and infallibly foreſee an Event through uncertain and contingent Cauſes. All the reaſonable ſatisfaction that can be had in this matter is this, that it is not at all unreaſonable to ſuppoſe that *infinite Knowledge* may have ways of knowing things which our *finite Underſtandings* can by no means comprehend how they can poſſibly be known.

Again, There is hardly any thing more inconceiveable than how a thing ſhould be of it ſelf, and without any Cauſe of its Being; and yet our Reaſon compels us to acknowledge this; Becauſe we certainly ſee that ſomething is, which muſt either have been of it ſelf and without a Cauſe, or elſe ſomething that we do not ſee muſt have been of it ſelf and have made all other things: And by this reaſoning we are forced to acknowledge a *Deity*, the Mind of Man being able to find no reſt but in the acknowledgment of one *eternal* and *wiſe Mind* as the *Principle* and *Firſt Cauſe* of all other things; and this *Principle* is that which Mankind do by general conſent call *God*. So that God hath laid a ſure foundation of our acknowledgment

ment of his Being in the Reaſon of our own Minds: And though it be one of the hardeſt things in the World to conceive how any thing can be of it ſelf, yet neceſſity drives us to acknowledge it whether we will or no: And this being once granted, our Reaſon, being tired in trying all other ways, will for its own quiet and eaſe force us at laſt to fall in with the general apprehenſion and belief of Mankind concerning a *Deity*.

To give but one *Inſtance* more; There is the like Difficulty in conceiving *how any thing can be made* out of nothing; and yet our Reaſon doth oblige us to believe it: Becauſe *Matter*, which is a very *imperfect Being* and merely *paſſive*, muſt either always have been of it ſelf; or elſe, by the infinite Power of a moſt *perfect and active Being*, muſt have been made out of nothing: Which is much more credible, than that any thing ſo *imperfect* as *Matter* is ſhould be of it ſelf: Becauſe that which is of it ſelf cannot be conceived to have any bounds and limits of its *Being* and *Perfection*; for by the ſame reaſon that it neceſſarily is and of it ſelf, it muſt neceſſarily have all perfection, which it is certain *Matter* hath not; and yet *neceſſary Exiſtence* is ſo great a Perfection, that we cannot reaſonably ſuppoſe any thing that hath this Perfection to want any other.

Thus you ſee, by theſe *Inſtances*, that it is not repugnant to Reaſon to believe a great many things to be, of the manner of whoſe Exiſtence we are not able to give a particular and diſtinct account. And much leſs is it repugnant to Reaſon to believe thoſe things concerning God which we are very well aſſured he hath declared concerning Himſelf, though theſe things by our Reaſon ſhould be incomprehenſible.

And this is truly the Caſe as to the matter now under debate: We are ſufficiently aſſured that the *Scriptures* are a *Divine Revelation*, and that this *Myſtery* of the *Trinity* is therein declared to us. Now that we cannot comprehend it, is no ſufficient Reaſon not to believe it: For if this were a good Reaſon for not believing it, then no Man ought to believe that there is a God, becauſe his Nature is moſt certainly incomprehenſible. But we are aſſured by many Arguments that there is a God; and the ſame *natural Reaſon* which aſſures us that *He is*, doth likewiſe aſſure us that *He is incomprehenſible*; and therefore our believing Him to be ſo doth by no means overthrow our belief of His Being.

In like manner, we are aſſured by *Divine Revelation* of the truth of this Doctrine of the *Trinity*; and being once aſſured of *that*, our not being able fully to comprehend it is not reaſon enough to ſtagger our belief of it. A Man cannot deny what he ſees, though the neceſſary conſequence of admitting it may be ſomething which he cannot comprehend. One cannot deny the Frame of this World which he ſees with his Eyes, though from thence it will neceſſarily follow, that either *that* or ſomething elſe muſt be of it ſelf; which yet, as I ſaid before, is a thing which no Man can comprehend how it can be.

And by the ſame Reaſon a Man muſt not deny what God ſays, to be true; though he cannot comprehend many things which God ſays: As particularly concerning this *Myſtery* of the *Trinity*. It ought then to ſatisfie us that there is ſufficient evidence that this Doctrine is delivered in *Scripture*, and that what is there declared concerning it doth not imply a Contradiction. For why ſhould our finite underſtandings pretend to comprehend that which is infinite, or to know all the real *Differences* that are conſiſtent with the Unity of an Infinite Being: or to be able fully to explain this *Myſtery* by any ſimilitude or reſemblance taken from *finite Beings*?

But before I leave this Argument, I cannot but take notice of one thing which they of the *Church* of *Rome* are perpetually objecting to us upon this Occaſion. And it is this, That by the ſame reaſon that we believe the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, we may and muſt receive that of *Tranſubſtantiation.* God forbid: Becauſe of all the *Doctrines* that ever were in any Religion, this of *Tranſubſtantiation* is certainly the moſt abominably abſurd.

However, this *Objection* plainly ſhews how fondly and obſtinately they are addicted to their own Errors, how miſhapen and monſtrous ſoever; inſomuch, that rather than the Dictates of their Church, how abſurd ſoever, ſhould be call'd in queſtion, they will queſtion the truth even of *Chriſtianity* it ſelf; and if we will not take in *Tranſubſtantiation*, and admit it to be a *neceſſary Article* of the *Chriſtian Faith*, they grow ſo ſullen and deſperate that they matter not what becomes of all the reſt: And rather than not have their Will of us in that which is *controverted*, they will give up that which by their own confeſſion is an *undoubted Article* of the *Chriſtian Faith*, and not controverted on either Side; except only by the *Socinians*, who yet are hearty Enemies to *Tranſubſtantiation*, and have expoſed the abſurdity of it with great advantage.

But I ſhall endeavour to return a more particular *Anſwer* to this *Objection*; and ſuch a one as I hope will ſatisfie every conſiderate and unprejudic'd Mind, that after all this confidence and ſwaggering of theirs there is by no means equal reaſon either for the *receiving* or for the *rejecting* of theſe *two Doctrines* of the *Trinity* and *Tranſubſtantiation.*

Firſt, There is not equal reaſon for the *belief* of theſe *Two Doctrinns.* This *Objection*, if it be of any force, muſt ſuppoſe that there is equal evidence and proof from *Scripture* for theſe *two Doctrines:* But this we utterly deny, and with great reaſon; becauſe it is no more evident from the words of *Scripture*, that the *Sacramental Bread* is ſubſtantially changed into *Chriſt's natural Body* by virtue of thoſe words, *This is my Body*, than it is, that *Chriſt* is ſubſtantially changed into a *natural Vine* by virtue of thoſe words, *I am the true Vine*; or than that the *Rock* in the Wilderneſs, of which the *Iſraelites* drank, was ſubſtantially changed into the *Perſon of Chriſt*, becauſe it is expreſly ſaid, *That Rock was Chriſt*; or than that the *Chriſtian Church* is ſubſtantially changed into the *natural Body* of *Chriſt*, becauſe it is in expreſs terms ſaid of the *Church*, That *it is his Body.* Joh. 15. 1. Eph. 1. 23.

But beſides this, ſeveral of their own moſt learned *Writers* have freely acknowledged, that *Tranſubſtantiation* can neither be directly proved, nor neceſſarily concluded from *Scripture:* But this the *Writers* of the *Chriſtian Church* did never acknowledge concerning the *Trinity*, and the *Divinity* of *Chriſt*; but have always appealed to the clear and undeniable Teſtimonies of *Scripture* for the proof of theſe *Doctrines.* And then the whole force of the Objection amounts to this, That if I am bound to believe what I am ſure God ſays, though I cannot comprehend it; then I am bound by the ſame reaſon to believe the greateſt Abſurdity in the World, though I have no manner of aſſurance of any *Divine Revelation* concerning it. And if this be their meaning, though we underſtand not *Tranſubſtantiation*, yet we very well underſtand what they would have, but cannot grant it; becauſe there is not equal reaſon to believe *two* things, for *one* of which there is good proof, and for the other no proof at all.

Secondly, Neither is there equal reaſon for the *rejecting* of theſe two *Doctrines.* This the Objection ſuppoſes, which yet cannot be ſuppoſed but upon one or both of theſe two grounds: Either becauſe theſe two *Doctrines* are equally *incomprehenſible*, or becauſe they are equally loaded with *Abſurdities* and *Contradictions.*

The *Firſt* is no good ground of *rejecting* any *Doctrine*, merely becauſe it is *incomprehenſible*; as I have abundantly ſhew'd already. But beſides this, there is a wide difference between plain matters of *Senſe*, and *Myſteries* concerning God; and it does by no means follow, that, if a Man do once admit any thing concerning God which he cannot *comprehend*, he hath no reaſon afterwards to believe what he himſelf *ſees*. This is a moſt unreaſonable and deſtructive way of arguing, becauſe it ſtrikes at the foundation of all Certainty, and ſets every Man at liberty to deny the moſt plain and evident *Truths* of *Chriſtianity*, if he may not be humour'd in having the abſurdeſt things in the World admitted for true. The next ſtep will be to perſuade us, that we may as well deny the Being of *God* becauſe his Nature is *incomprehenſible* by our *Reaſon*, as deny *Tranſubſtantiation* becauſe *it evidently contradicts* our *Senſes*.

2*dly*. Nor are theſe *two Doctrines* loaded with the like *Abſurdities* and *Contradictions*: So far from this, that the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, as it is delivered in the *Scriptures*, and hath already been explain'd, hath no Abſurdity or Contradiction either involv'd in it, or neceſſarily conſequent upon it: But the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* is big with all imaginable Abſurdity and Contradiction. And their own *Schoolmen* have ſufficiently expos'd it; eſpecially *Scotus*, and he deſigned to do ſo, as any Man that attentively reads him may plainly diſcover: For in his *Diſputation* about it he treats this *Doctrine* with the greateſt contempt, as a new Invention of the Council of *Lateran* under Pope *Innocent* III. To the *Decree* of which *Council* concerning it he ſeems to pay a formal ſubmiſſion, but really derides it as contrary to the common *Senſe* and *Reaſon* of Mankind, and not at all ſupported by *Scripture*; as any one may eaſily diſcern that will carefully conſider his manner of handling it and the reſult of his whole *Diſputation* about it.

And now ſuppoſe there were ſome appearance of Abſurdity and Contradiction in the Doctrine of the *Trinity* as it is delivered in *Scripture*, muſt we therefore believe a Doctrine which is not at all reveal'd in *Scripture*, and which hath certainly in it all the *abſurdities* in the World, and all the *Contradictions* to *Senſe* and *Reaſon*; and which once admitted, doth at once deſtroy all Certainty? Yes, ſay they, why not? ſince we of the *Church* of *Rome* are ſatisfy'd that this *Doctrine* is reveal'd in *Scripture*; or, if it be not, is defin'd by the Church, which is every whit as good. But is this equal, to demand of us the belief of a thing which hath always been controverted, not only between *us* and *them*, but even among themſelves, at leaſt till the *Council* of *Trent*? And this upon ſuch unreaſonable terms, that we muſt either yield this *Point* to them, or elſe renounce a *Doctrine* agreed on both Sides to be reveal'd in *Scripture*.

To ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this proceeding, Let us ſuppoſe a *Prieſt* of the Church of *Rome* preſſing a *Jew* or *Turk* to the belief of *Tranſubſtantiation*, and becauſe one kindneſs deſerves another, the *Jew* or *Turk* ſhould demand of him the belief of all the *Fables* in the *Talmud*, or in the *Alchoran*; ſince none of theſe, nor indeed all of them together, are near ſo abſurd as *Tranſubſtantiation*: Would not this be much more reaſonable and equal than what they demand of us? Since no Abſurdity, how monſtrous and big ſoever, can be thought of, which may not enter into an Underſtanding in which a Breach hath been already made wide enough to admit *Tranſubſtantiation*. The Prieſts of *Baal* did not half ſo much deſerve to be expos'd by the *Prophet* for their Superſtition and Folly, as the Prieſts of the Church of *Rome* do for this ſenſleſs and ſtupid *Doctrine* of theirs with a *hard Name*. I ſhall only add this one thing more, That if this Doctrine were poſſible to be true, and clearly prov'd to be ſo; yet it would be evidently uſeleſs and to no purpoſe. For it pretends to change the ſubſtance of one thing into the ſubſtance of another thing that is already and before this change is pretended to be made. But to what purpoſe? Not to make the *Body* of Chriſt, for that was already in Being; and the Subſtance of the *Bread* is loſt, nothing of it remaineth but the *Accidents*, which are good for nothing, and indeed are nothing when the Subſtance is deſtroy'd and gone.

All that now remains, is to make ſome *practical Inferences* from this *Doctrine* of the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature.* And they ſhall be the ſame which God himſelf makes by *Moſes*, which *Text* is alſo cited by our *Saviour*, *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord thy God is one Lord; and thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy ſtrength: And thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf.* Deut. 6. 4. Mark 12. 29, 30, 31. So that according to our *Saviour* the whole Duty of Man, the *love of God*, and *of our Neighbour* is founded in the *Unity* of the Divine *Nature.*

I. The *love of God*; *The Lord thy God is One Lord*, therefore *thou ſhalt love Him with all thy heart*, &c. *this is the firſt and great Commandment*: And it comprehends in it all the *Duties* of the *firſt Table* as naturally flowing from it. As that we ſhould *ſerve him only*, and pay no *Religious Worſhip* to any but to *Him.* For to pay *Religious Worſhip* to any thing is to make it a *God*, and to acknowledge it for ſuch: And therefore *God* being but *One*, we can give *Religious Worſhip* to none but to *Him* only. And among all the parts of *Religious Worſhip* none is more peculiarly appropriated to the *Deity* than *ſolemn Invocation* and *Prayer.* For he to whom Men addreſs their Requeſts, at all times, and in all places, muſt be ſuppoſed to be always every-where preſent, to underſtand all our deſires and wants, and to be able to ſupply them; and this God only is, and can do.

So likewiſe from the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature* may be inferr'd, that we ſhould not worſhip God by any *ſenſible Image* or *Repreſentation:* Becauſe *God* being a *ſingular Being* there is nothing like *Him*, or that can without injuring and debaſing his moſt *ſpiritual* and *perfect* and *immenſe Being* be compared to *Him:* As *He* himſelf ſpeaks in the *Prophet*, *To whom will ye liken me, ſaith the Lord, and make me equal?* Iſa. 46. 5. And therefore with no *Diſtinction* whatſoever can it be lawful to give *Religious Worſhip*, or any part of it, to any but *God:* We can *pray* to none but to *Him*, becauſe *He only* is every-where preſent, and *only knows the Hearts of all the children of Men*; 1 Kings 8. 39. which *Solomon* gives as the reaſon why we ſhould addreſs our Supplications to *God* only, *who dwelleth in the Heavens.*

So that the Reaſon of theſe *two Precepts* is founded in the *Unity* and *Singularity* of the *Divine Nature*, and unleſs there be more *Gods* than *One*, we muſt *worſhip Him only*, and *pray* to none but *Him*: Becauſe we can give *Invocation* to none but to *Him only* whom we believe to be *God*; as St. *Paul* reaſons, *How ſhall they call on Him in whom they have not believed?* Rom. 10. 14.

II. The *love* likewiſe of our *Neighbour* is founded in the *Unity* of the *Divine Nature*, and may be inferr'd from it: *Hear, O Iſrael, the Lord thy God is One Lord, therefore thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf.* And the *Apoſtle* gives this reaſon why *Chriſtians* ſhould be at unity among themſelves; *There is One God and Father of all*, and therefore we ſhould *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*; Eph. 4. 6. that is, live in mutual love and peace.

The *Prophet* likewiſe aſſigns this reaſon why all Mankind ſhould be upon good terms with one another, and not be injurious one to another, *Have we not all One Father? hath not One God created us? Why do we then deal treacherouſly every man againſt his brother?* Mal. 2. 10.

And therefore when we ſee ſuch hatred and enmity among *Men*, ſuch diviſions and animoſities among *Chriſtians*, we may not only ask St. *Paul's* queſtion, *Is Chriſt divided?* that we cannot agree about ſerving him; either all to ſerve him in one way, or to bear with one another in our differences: I ſay, we may not only ask St. *Paul's* queſtion, *Is Chriſt divided?* but may ask further, *Is God divided?* Is there not *One* God, and are we not all his Off-ſpring? Are we not all the Sons of *Adam, who was the Son of God?* So that if we trace our ſelves to our *Original*, we ſhall find a great nearneſs and equality among Men: And this equality that we are all God's *Creatures* and *Image*, and that the *One only God* is the *Father of us all*, is a more real ground of mutual *love*, and *peace*, and *equity* in our dealings one with another, than any of thoſe petty differences and diſtinctions of *ſtrong* and *weak*, of *rich* and *poor*, of *wiſe* and *fooliſh*, of *baſe* and *honourable*, can be to encourage Men to any thing of *Inſolence, Injuſtice*, and *inequality of dealing* one towards another. Becauſe *that* wherein we all agree, that we are the *Creatures* and *Children of God*, and have all *One* common *Father*, is eſſential and conſtant; but thoſe things wherein we differ are accidental and mutable, and happen to one another by turns.

Thus much may ſuffice to have been ſpoken concerning the *firſt Propoſition* in the *Text, There is one God:* To *Him, Father, Son*, and *H. Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, Dominion and Power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

OF
STEDFASTNESS
IN
RELIGION.

THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

BEING, *I hope, for the remainder of my Life, releaſed from that irkſome and unpleaſant work of* Controverſie *and* Wrangling *about Religion, I ſhall now turn my Thoughts to ſomething more agreeable to my temper, and of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of true Religion, to the happineſs of Human Society, and the Reformation of the World.*

I have no intention to reflect upon any that ſtand up in defence of the Truth, *and contend earneſtly for it, endeavouring* in the ſpirit of meekneſs *to reclaim thoſe that are in* Error. *For I doubt not but a very good Man may upon ſeveral occaſions be almoſt unavoidably engaged in* Controverſies *of Religion; and if he have a Head clear and cool enough, ſo as to be Maſter of his own* Notions *and* Temper *in that hot kind of Service, he may therein do conſiderable advantage to the* Truth: *Though a Man that hath once* drawn Blood in Controverſie, *as Mr.* Mede *expreſſeth it, is ſeldom known ever perfectly to recover his own good temper afterwards.*

For this reaſon a good Man ſhould not be very willing, when his Lord comes, *to* be found ſo doing, *and as it were* beating his fellow-ſervants: *And all* Controverſie, *as it is uſually managed, is little better. A good Man would be loth to be taken out of the World reeking hot from a ſharp Contention with a perverſe Adverſary; and not a little out of countenance, to find himſelf in this temper tranſlated into the calm and peaceable* Regions *of the* Bleſſed, *where nothing but perfect* charity *and* good-will *reign for ever.*

I know not whether St. Paul, *who had been* taken up into the third Heavens, *did by that Queſtion of his,* Where is the Diſputer of THIS WORLD? *intend to inſinuate, that this* wrangling *work hath place only in* this World, *and upon this* Earth where only *there is a* Duſt *to be raiſed; but will have no place in the* Other. *But whether St.* Paul *intended this or not, the thing it ſelf I think is true, that in the* other

World *all things will be clear and paſt* diſpute. *To be ſure, among the* Bleſſed; *and probably alſo among the* Miſerable, *unleſs fierce and furious Contentions, with great* Heat *without* Light, *about things of no moment and concernment to them, ſhould be deſign'd for a part of their* Torment.

As to the following Sermons, *I am ſenſible that the* Style *of them is more looſe and full of words, than is agreeable to juſt and exact* Diſcourſes: *But ſo I think the* Style *of* Popular Sermons *ought to be. And therefore I have not been very careful to mend this matter; chuſing rather that they ſhould appear in that native ſimplicity in which, ſo many years ago, they were firſt fram'd, than dreſs'd up with too much Care and Art. As they are, I hope, the candid and ingenuous Readers will take them in good part.*

And I do heartily wiſh, that all that are concern'd in the reſpective Duties, *treated on in the following* Sermons, *would be perſuaded ſo to lay them to heart as to put them effectually in practice: That how much ſoever the Reformation of this corrupt and degenerate Age in which we live is almoſt utterly to be deſpair'd of, we may yet have a more comfortable proſpect of future Times, by ſeeing the foundation of a better World begun to be laid in the careful and conſcientious diſcharge of the Duties here mention'd: That by this means* the Generations to come may know God, and the Children yet unborn may fear the Lord.

I have great reaſon to be ſenſible how faſt the infirmities of Age are coming upon me, and therefore muſt work the Works of Him, *whoſe Providence hath placed me in the* Station *wherein I am,* whilſt it is Day, becauſe the Night cometh when no man can work.

I knew very well, before I enter'd upon this great and weighty Charge, *my own manifold defects, and how unequal my beſt abilities were for the due diſcharge of it; but I did not feel this ſo ſenſibly as I now do every day more and more. And therefore that I might make ſome ſmall amends for greater failings, I knew not how better to place the broken hours I had to ſpare from almoſt perpetual buſineſs of one kind or other, than in preparing ſomething for the Publick that might be of uſe to recover the decayed Piety and Vertue of the preſent Age; in which iniquity doth ſo much abound, and the Love of God and Religion is grown ſo cold.*

To this end I have choſen to publiſh theſe plain Sermons, *and to recommend them to the ſerious peruſal and faithful practice both of the* Paſtors *and* People *committed to my Charge; earneſtly beſeeching Almighty God, that by his Bleſſing they may prove effectual to that good end for which they are ſincerely deſign'd.*

SERMON XLIX.

Concerning

Reſolution and Stedfaſtneſs in Religion.

Preached at

St. *Lawrence-Jewry, June* the 3*d.* 1684.

JOSH. XXIV. 15.

--*But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.*

AFTER *Joſhua* had brought the People of *Iſrael* into the promiſed Land and ſetled them in the quiet Poſſeſſion of it, his great deſire was to eſtabliſh them in the true Religion, namely, in the Worſhip of the *One true God,* who had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt,* and given them the Poſſeſſion of that good Land, the Land of *Canaan.*

And now finding himſelf weak and declining, being an hundred and ten Years old, and fearing leſt after his death the People ſhould fall off from the true Religion to the Worſhip of Idols, he like a wiſe and good Governour conſiders with himſelf what courſe he had beſt to take to keep them firm and ſtedfaſt in their *Religion,* and to prevent their defection to the *Idolatry* of the *Nations round about them.*

And to this end he calls a general Aſſembly of *all Iſrael,* that is, of the *Elders,* and *Heads,* and *Judges,* and *Officers* of the ſeveral *Tribes;* and in a very wiſe and eloquent *Speech* repreſents to them in what a miraculous manner God had *driven out the Nations before them, much greater and ſtronger Nations than they,* and had given them their Land to poſſeſs it. And, in a word, had performed punctually all that he had promiſed to them. chap. 23. v. 1.

And therefore they ought *to take great heed to themſelves, to love God, and to ſerve Him;* and if they did not, he tells them that it ſhould *come to paſs, that as all good things are come upon you which the Lord your God promiſed you, ſo ſhall the Lord bring upon you all evil things, until he have deſtroyed you from off this good Land which the Lord your God hath given you.* chap. 23. 15.

After this, he calls them together a *ſecond* time, and gives them a brief hiſtorical Account and deduction of the great Mercies of God to them and their Fathers, from the days of *Abraham,* whom he had called out from among his Idolatrous Kindred and Countreymen, unto that Day.

From the conſideration of all which, he earneſtly exhorts them to renew their Covenant with God; and for his particular ſatisfaction, before he left the World, ſolemnly to promiſe that they would for ever ſerve God and forſake the ſervice of Idols: *Now therefore fear the Lord, and ſerve Him in ſin-*

cerity

cerity and in truth: And put away the Gods which your Fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the Flood, and in Egypt; and ſerve ye the Lord.

And then in the *Text*, by a very elegant *Scheme* of Speech he does, as it were, once more ſet them at liberty; and, as if they had never engaged themſelves to God by Covenant before, he leaves them to their free choice: *And if it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve; whether the Gods whom your Fathers ſerved on the other ſide of the Flood, or the Gods of the Amorites in whoſe Land ye dwell.*

Not that they were at liberty whether they would ſerve the true God, or not; but to inſinuate to them that Religion ought to be their free choice: And likewiſe, that the true Religion hath thoſe real advantages on its Side, that it may ſafely be referr'd to any conſiderate Man's choice: *If it ſeem evil unto you*; as if he had ſaid, If after all the demonſtrations which God hath given of his Miraculous Preſence among you, and the mighty obligations which he hath laid upon you by bringing you out of the *Land of Egypt*, and the *Houſe of Bondage* by ſo outſtretched an Arm; and by driving out the Nations before you, and giving you their Land to poſſeſs: If after all this, you can think it fit to quit the ſervice of *this God*, and to worſhip the *Idols* of the Nations whom you have ſubdued, thoſe vanquiſhed and baffled Deities: If you can think it reaſonable ſo to do, but ſurely you cannot; then take your choice: *If it ſeem evil unto you to ſerve the Lord, chuſe you this day whom ye will ſerve.*

And to direct and encourage them to make a right choice, he declares to them his own Reſolution, which he hopes will alſo be theirs; and as he had heretofore been their *Captain*, ſo now he offers himſelf to be their *Example*: But whether they will follow him or not, he for his part is fix'd and immovable in this Reſolution; *But as for ME and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.*

In effect he tells them; I have propoſed the beſt Religion to your choice, and I cannot but think, nay I cannot but hope, that you will all ſtedfaſtly adhere to it. It is ſo reaſonable and wiſe, ſo much your Intereſt and your Happineſs to do it. But if you ſhould do otherwiſe, if you ſhould be ſo weak as not to diſcern the Truth, ſo wilful and ſo wicked as not to embrace it: Though you ſhould all make another choice, and run away from the true God to the worſhip of Idols; I for my part am ſtedfaſtly reſolved what to do: In a caſe ſo manifeſt, in a matter ſo reaſonable, no Number, no Example ſhall prevail with me to the contrary; I will, if need be, ſtand alone in that which is ſo evidently and unqueſtionably Right: And though this whole Nation ſhould revolt all at once from the Worſhip of the true God, and join with the reſt of the World in a falſe Religion and in the Worſhip of Idols; and mine were the only Family left in all *Iſrael*, nay in the whole World, that continued to worſhip the God of *Iſrael*, I would ſtill be of the ſame mind; I would ſtill perſiſt in this Reſolution, and act according to it; *As for me and my houſe we will ſerve the Lord.*

A Reſolution truly worthy of ſo great a Prince and ſo good a Man: In which he is a double Pattern to us.

Firſt, Of the brave Reſolution of a *good Man*, namely, That if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the Profeſſion and Practice of the true Religion: *As for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

Secondly, Of the pious Care of a *good Father and Maſter of a Family*, to train up thoſe under his Charge in the true Religion and Worſhip of God; *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will ſerve the Lord.*

I ſhall at this time, by God's aſſiſtance, treat of the *Firſt* of theſe, namely,

I. Of the brave Reſolution of a *good Man*, that if there were occaſion, and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the Profeſſion and Practice of God's true Religion: *Chuſe you this day*, ſays *Joſhua*, *whom ye will ſerve; but as for ME, I will ſerve the Lord. Joſhua* here puts the Caſe at the utmoſt extremity, That not only the great Nations of the World, the *Egyptians* and *Chaldeans*, and all the leſſer Nations round about them, and in whoſe Land they dwelt, were all along ſince revolted to *Idolatry*, and pretended great Antiquity and long Preſcription for the Worſhip of their falſe Gods: But he ſuppoſeth yet further, That the only true and viſible Church of God then known in the World, the People of *Iſrael*, ſhould likewiſe generally revolt and forſake the Worſhip of the *true God*, and cleave to the Service of *Idols:* Yet in this Caſe, if we could ſuppoſe it to happen, he declares his firm and ſtedfaſt Reſolution to adhere to the Worſhip of the true God: And though all others ſhould fall off from it, that He would ſtand alone in the Profeſſion and Practice of the true Religion: *But as for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

In the handling of this Argument I ſhall do theſe *two* things.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the *matter* of this Reſolution, and the due *bounds* and *limits* of it.

Secondly, I ſhall endeavour to vindicate the *reaſonableneſs* of this Reſolution from the *Objections* to which this ſingular and peremptory kind of Reſolution may ſeem liable.

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the *matter* of this Reſolution, and the due *bounds* and *limits* of it.

1ſt. The *matter* of this Reſolution. *Joſhua* here reſolves, that if need were, and things were brought to that paſs, he would ſtand alone, or with very few adhering to him, in the Profeſſion and Practice of the true Religion. And this is not a mere Suppoſition of an impoſſible Caſe, which can never happen: For it may, and hath really and in fact happen'd in ſeveral Ages and Places of the World.

There hath been a general Apoſtacy of ſome great part of God's Church from the Belief and Profeſſion of the true Religion to *Idolatry*, and to *damnable Errors and Hereſies:* And ſome good Men have, upon the matter, ſtood alone in the open Profeſſion of the true Religion, in the midſt of this general Defection from it.

Elijah in that general Revolt of the People of *Iſrael*, when they had *forſaken the Covenant of the Lord, and broken down his Altars, and ſlain his Prophets*, and *he only*, as he thought, *was left* to ſtand *alone:* I ſay, in this Caſe when, as he verily believ'd, he had no body to ſtand by him, *he was very zealous for the Lord God of Hoſts*, 1 King. 18. 18. and with an undaunted courage ſtood up for the Worſhip of the true God, and reproved *Ahab* to his face for his defection to the Worſhip of Idols.

And thoſe *three* brave *Youths*, in the Prophecy of *Daniel*, did in the like chap. 3. reſolute and undaunted manner refuſe to obey the Command of the great King *Nebuchadnezzar, to worſhip the Image which he had ſet up;* when all others Submitted and paid Honour to it: Telling him plainly, v. 17, 18. *If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and He will deliver us out of thy hand: If not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip the golden Image which thou haſt ſet up.*

In like manner, and with the ſame Spirit and Courage, *Daniel* withſtood the Decree of *Darius*, which forbad Men to *ask a Petition of any God or Man*

Dan. 6. 7. *for thirty days, ſave of the King only*; and this under the pain of being *caſt in-*
to the Den of Lions: and when all others gave Obedience to it, he *ſet open*
the windows of his chamber towards Jeruſalem, and kneeled down upon his knees
v. 10. *three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks, as he did afore-time.*

In the prevalency of the *Arian* Hereſie *Athanaſius* almoſt ſtood alone in the profeſſion and maintenance of the Truth. And in the Reign of *Antichriſt* the *true Church* of God is repreſented by a *Woman* flying into the *Wilderneſs*, and living there in obſcurity for a long time; inſomuch that the Profeſſors of the Truth ſhould hardly be found. And yet during that Degeneracy of ſo great a Part of the *Chriſtian* Church, and the prevalency of *Antichriſt* for ſo many Ages, ſome few in evey Age did appear who did reſolutely own the Truth and bear Witneſs to it with their Blood: But theſe did almoſt ſtand alone and by themſelves, like a few ſcattered Sheep wandring up and down in a wide *Wilderneſs*.

Thus, in the heighth of *Popery*, *Wickliffe* appear'd here in *England*; and *Hierome* of *Prague* and *John Huſs* in *Germany* and *Bohemia*. And in the beginning of the *Reformation*, when *Popery* had quite over-run theſe *Weſtern* Parts of the World and ſubdu'd her Enemies on every ſide, and *Antichriſt* ſate ſecurely in the quiet poſſeſſion of his Kingdom; *Luther* aroſe, a bold and rough Man, but a fit *Wedge* to cleave in ſunder ſo hard and *knotty a Block*; and appear'd ſtoutly againſt the groſs *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the Church of *Rome*; and for a long time ſtood alone, and with a moſt invincible Spirit and Courage maintain'd his ground and reſiſted the united malice and force of *Antichriſt* and his *Adherents*; and gave him ſo terrible a Wound, that he is not yet perfectly healed and recovered of it.

So that for a Man to ſtand alone, or with a very few adhering to him and ſtanding by him, is not a mere imaginary Suppoſition, but a Caſe that hath really and in fact happen'd in ſeveral Ages and Places of the World. Let us then proceed to conſider in the

2d. place, The due *limits* and *bounds* of this peremptory Reſolution. in all matters of *Faith* and *Practice* which are *plain* and *evident* either from *Natural Reaſon*, or from *Divine Revelation*, this *Reſolution* ſeems to be very reaſonable: But in things *doubtful* a modeſt Man, and every Man hath reaſon to be ſo, would be very apt to be ſtagger'd by the Judgment of a very Wiſe Man; and much more of many ſuch, and eſpecially by the unanimous Judgment of the generality of Men; the general Voice and Opinion of Mankind being next to the Voice of God himſelf.

For in matters of an *indifferent* nature, which God hath neither commanded nor forbidden, ſuch as are many of the *Circumſtances* and *Ceremonies* of God's Worſhip, a Man would not be ſingular, much leſs ſtiff and immovable in his ſingularity; but would be apt to yield and ſurrender himſelf to the *general Voice* and *Opinion*, and to comply with the *common Cuſtom* and *Practice*; and much more with the *Rules* and *Conſtitutions* of *Authority*, whether *Civil* or *Eccleſiaſtical*. Becauſe in things *lawful* and *indifferent*, we are bound by the Rules of *Decency* and *Civility* not to thwart the *general Practice*; and by the *Commands* of *God*, we are certainly obliged to obey the *lawful Commands* of *lawful Authority*.

But in things plainly contrary to the evidence of *Senſe* or *Reaſon*, or to the *Word of God*, a Man would complement no Man, or Number of Men; nor would he pin his Faith upon any *Church* in the World; much leſs upon any *ſingle Man*, no not the *Pope*; no, though there were never ſo many probable Arguments brought for the proof of his *Infallibility*.

In this Caſe, a Man would be *ſingular*, and ſtand alone againſt the whole World; againſt the wrath and rage of a *King* and all the terrors of his *fiery Furnace*; as in other matters, a Man would not believe all the *Learned Men* in the World againſt the clear evidence of *Senſe* and *Reaſon*. If all the great *Mathematicians* of all Ages, *Archimedes*, and *Euclide*, and *Apollonius*, and *Diophantus*, &c. could be ſuppoſed to meet together in a *General Council*, and ſhould there declare in the moſt *ſolemn* manner, and give it under their *Hands* and *Seals*, that *twice two did not make four, but five*; this would not move me in the leaſt to be of their mind; nay, I who am no *Mathematician* would maintain the contrary, and would perſiſt in it without being in the leaſt ſtartled by the poſitive Opinion of theſe great and *learned Men*; and ſhould moſt certainly conclude, that they were either all of them out of their Wits, or that they were byaſs'd by ſome Intereſt or other, and ſwayed againſt the clear evidence of Truth and the full conviction of their own Reaſon to make ſuch a determination as this. They might indeed over-rule the Point by their Authority, but in my inward judgment I ſhould ſtill be where I was before.

Juſt ſo in matters of *Religion*, if any *Church*, though with never ſo glorious and confident a pretence to *Infallibility*, ſhould declare for *Tranſubſtantiation*, that is, that the *Bread* and *Wine* in the *Sacrament*, by virtue of the *Conſecration* of the *Prieſt*, are ſubſtantially changed into the *natural Body* and *Blood* of *Chriſt*; this is ſo notoriouſly contrary both to the *Senſe* and Reaſon of Mankind, that a Man ſhould chuſe to ſtand ſingle in the oppoſition of it, and laugh at or rather pity the reſt of the World that could be ſo ſervilely blind as ſeemingly to conſpire in the belief of ſo *monſtrous* an *Abſurdity*.

And in like manner, if any Church ſhould declare, that *Images* are to be Worſhipped, or that the Worſhip of God is to be performed in an *unknown Tongue*; and that the *H. Scriptures*, which contain the Word and Will of God, and teach Men what they are to believe and do in order to their eternal Salvation, are to be lock'd up and kept concealed from the People in a Language which they do not underſtand, leſt if they were permitted the free uſe of them in their *Mother Tongue* they ſhould know more of the Mind and Will of God than is convenient for the common People to know, whoſe *Devotion* and *Obedience* to the Church does mainly depend upon their *Ignorance*: Or ſhould declare, that the *Sacrifice* of *Chriſt* was not offer'd *once for all*, but is and ought to be repeated ten Millions of times every Day: And that the *People* ought to receive the *Communion in one kind only*, and the *Cup* by no means to be truſted with them for fear the *Profane Beards* of the *Laity* ſhould drink of it: And that the *ſaving efficacy* of the *Sacraments* doth depend upon the *intention of the Prieſt*, without which the Receiver can have no benefit by them; Theſe are all of them ſo plainly contrary to *Scripture*, and moſt of them in *Reaſon* ſo abſurd, that the Authority of no Church whatſoever can oblige a Man to the belief of them.

Nay, I go yet further, that being evidently contrary to the Doctrine of the *Goſpel*, though an *Apoſtle*, or an *Angel from Heaven* ſhould declare them, we ought to reject them. And for this I have St. *Paul*'s Authority and Warrant, who ſpeaking of ſome that perverted the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt* by teaching things contrary to it, *Though we*, ſays he, *or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Goſpel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed: As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again, though an Apoſtle, though an Angel from Heaven preach any other Goſpel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accurſed.* You ſee he repeats it over again, to expreſs not only his own confident aſſurance, but the Gal. 1. 7, 8, 9.

certainty of the thing. And here is an *Anathema* with a witneſs, which we may confidently oppoſe to all the *Anathema*'s which the *Council* of *Trent* hath ſo liberally denounced againſt all thoſe who ſhall preſume to gainſay theſe *New Doctrines* of their Church; which are in truth *another Goſpel*, than that which our *B. Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* taught: And yet on their Side there is neither an *Apoſtle*, nor an *Angel from Heaven* in the Caſe.

To give but one *Inſtance* more: If *Bellarmin* ſhall tell me, as he expreſly does, That *if the Pope ſhould declare Virtue to be Vice, and Vice to be Virtue, I were bound to believe him unleſs I would ſin againſt Conſcience:* And if all the World ſhould ſay the ſame that *Bellarmin* does, namely, that this *Infallible Declarer* of *Virtue* and *Vice* were to be believed and followed; yet I could not poſſibly be of their mind, for this plain and undeniable Reaſon; becauſe if *Virtue* and *Vice* be all one, then Religion is nothing; ſince the main Deſign of Religion is to teach men the difference between *Virtue* and *Vice*, and to oblige them to practiſe the *one* and to refrain from the *other:* And if Religion be nothing, then Heaven and Hell are nothing: And if Heaven be nothing, then an *infallible Guide* thither is of no uſe and to no manner of purpoſe; becauſe he is a Guide no whither, and ſo his great *Office* ceaſes and falls of it ſelf.

And now leſt any ſhould think me ſingular in this *Aſſertion*, and that thereby I give a great deal too much to the ſingle Judgment of private Perſons, and too little to the Authority of a Church, I will produce the deliberate Judgment of a very Learned Man and a great Aſſertor of the Churche's Authority, concerning the matter I am now ſpeaking of: I mean Mr. *Hooker*, in his deſervedly admired *Book* of *Eccleſiaſtical Policy.* His words are theſe, *I grant*, ſays he, *that Proof derived from the Authority of Man's Judgment is not able to work that Aſſurance which doth grow by a ſtronger proof: and therefore although ten thouſand General Councils ſhould ſet down one and the ſame Definitive Sentence concerning any Point of Religion whatſoever, yet one Demonſtrative Reaſon alledged, or one Teſtimony cited from the Word of God himſelf to the contrary, could not chuſe but overſway them all: In as much as for them to be deceived it is not ſo impoſſible, as it is that Demonſtrative Reaſon or Divine Teſtimony ſhould deceive.*

And again, *For men*, ſays he, *to be tyed and led by Authority, as it were with a kind of Captivity of Judgment, and though there be Reaſon to the contrary not to liſten to it, but follow like Beaſts the firſt in the Herd, this were Brutiſh.*

Again, *That the Authority of Men ſhould prevail with Men, either againſt or above Reaſon is no part of OUR Belief. Companies of Learned Men, though they be never ſo great and Reverend, are to yield unto Reaſon, the weight whereof is no whit prejudiced by the ſimplicity of the Perſon which doth alledge it; but being found to be ſound and good, the bare Opinion of men to the contrary muſt of neceſſity ſtoop and give place.* And this he delivers not only as his own particular Judgment, but that which he apprehended to be the Judgment of the *Church of England.*

I have produced theſe clear and poſitive *Teſtimonies* of ſo learned and judicious a Perſon, and of ſo great eſteem in our Church, on purpoſe to prevent any miſapprehenſion, as if by this Diſcourſe I intended to derogate from the Authority of the Church and her juſt and reaſonable Determinations, in things no-wiſe contrary to plain *Reaſon* or the *Word of God.* And beyond this pitch no judicious *Proteſtant*, that I know of, ever ſtrain'd the Authority of the Church. I proceed now in the

Second place, to vindicate the *Reaſonableneſs* of this *Reſolution* from the *Objections* to which this *ſingular* and *peremptory* kind of *Reſolution* may ſeem liable; as

Firſt, It may very ſpeciouſly be ſaid, that this does not ſeem modeſt *Object.* 1. for a man to ſet up his own private Judgment againſt the general Suffrage and Vote. And it is very true, as I ſaid before, that about things *indifferent* a man ſhould not be ſtiff and ſingular; and in things *doubtful* and *obſcure* a man ſhould not be over-confident of his own Judgment, and inſiſt peremptorily upon it againſt the general Opinion: But in things that are plain and evident, either from *Scripture* or *Reaſon*, it is neither immodeſty, nor a culpable ſingularity, for a man to ſtand alone in the defence of the Truth. Becauſe in ſuch a Caſe a man does not oppoſe his own ſingle and private Judgment to the Judgment of *Many*, but the common Reaſon of Mankind and the Judgment of God plainly declared in his Word.

If the generality of men ſhould turn *Atheiſts* and *Infidels*, and ſhould deny the *Being* of God, or his *Providence*; the *Immortality* of men's Souls, and the *Rewards* and *Puniſhments* of another World: Or ſhould deny the Truth of the *Goſpel* and of the *Chriſtian* Religion, it would not certainly be any breach of modeſty for a man to appear ſingle, if no body elſe would ſtand by him, in the reſolute defence of theſe great Truths.

In like manner, when a whole Church, though never ſo large and numerous, ſhall conſpire together to corrupt the *Chriſtian* Religion ſo far as to impoſe upon Mankind, under the name of *Chriſtian Doctrines* and *Articles* of *Faith*, things plainly contrary to the Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind, and to the clear and expreſs Word of God, why muſt a Man needs be thought immodeſt, if he oppoſe ſuch groſs Errors and Corruptions of the *Chriſtian* Doctrine? And what reaſon have the *Church* of *Rome* to talk of modeſty in this Caſe, when they themſelves have the face to impoſe upon Mankind the belief of things contrary to what they and every man elſe ſees? As they do in their Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation: And to require of them to do what God hath expreſly forbidden, as in the Worſhip of *Images*; beſides a great many other *Idolatrous* Practices of that Church: To deny the People the free uſe of the *H. Scriptures*, and the *publick Service* of God in a *known Tongue*; contrary to the very end and deſign of all Religion, and in affront to the common Reaſon and Liberty of Mankind.

Secondly, It is pretended that it is more prudent for private Perſons to err *Object.* 2. with the Church, than to be ſo pertinacious in their own Opinions. To which I anſwer, that it may indeed be pardonable in ſome Caſes to be led into miſtake by the Authority of thoſe to whoſe Judgment and Inſtruction we ought to pay a great deference and ſubmiſſion: Provided always it be in things which are not plain and neceſſary; but ſurely it can never be prudent to err with any number, how great ſoever, in matters of Religion which are of moment, merely for *Numbers* ſake: But to comply with the *known Errors* and *Corruptions* of any Church whatſoever is certainly damnable.

Thirdly, It is pretended yet further, that men ſhall ſooner be excuſed in *Object.* 3. following the *Church*, than any particular *Man* or *Sect*. To this I anſwer, that it is very true if the matter be doubtful, and eſpecially if the Probabilities be equal, or near equal on both Sides: But if the Error be groſs and palpable, it will be no excuſe to have followed any number of Men, or any Church whatſoever. For here the competition is not between Men and Men, but between God and Men: And in this Caſe we muſt forſake all Men to follow God and his Truth. *Thou ſhalt in no wiſe follow a Multitude in a known Error*, is a *Rule* which in Reaſon is of equal obligation with that *Divine Law, Thou ſhalt in no-wiſe follow a Multitude to do evil*; or rather is comprehended in it, becauſe to *comply* with a *known Error* is certainly to *do Evil*.

And this very *Objection* the *Jews* made againſt our *B. Saviour* and the Doctrine which He taught, that the *Guides* and *Governours* of the *Jewiſh* Church did utterly differ from *Him*, and were of a contrary mind, *Have any of the Rulers*, ſay they, *believed on him?* What? will you be wiſer than your Rulers and Governors? What? follow the Doctrine of *one ſingle Man* againſt the unanimous Judgment and Sentence of the *Great Sanhedrim*, to whom the Trial of *Doctrines* and pretended *Prophets* doth of right belong?

But, as plauſible as this *Objection* may ſeem to be, it is to be conſidered that in a corrupt and degenerate Church the *Guides* and *Rulers* of it are commonly the worſt, and the moſt deeply engaged in the *Errors* and *Corruptions* of it. They brought them in at firſt; and their Succeſſors, who have been bred up in the belief and practice of them, are concern'd to uphold and maintain them: And ſo *long a Preſcription* gives a kind of *Sacred Stamp* even to *Error*, and an Authority not to be oppoſed and reſiſted.

And thus it was in the corrupt State of the *Jewiſh* Church, in our *Saviour's* Time: And ſo likewiſe in that great Degeneracy of the *Chriſtian* Church, in the Times of *Popery*, *their Rulers made them to err*: Inſomuch that when *Martin Luther* appeared in oppoſition to the *Errors* and *Superſtitions* of that Church, and was hard preſt with this very *Objection* which the *Phariſees* urged againſt our *Saviour*, he was forc'd to bolt out a kind of *unmannerly Truth*, *Religio nunquam magis periclitatur quàm inter Reverendiſſimos*; *Religion*, ſays he, *is never in greater hazard and worſe treated, than amongſt the moſt Reverend*; meaning the *Pope* and his *Cardinals*, and all the *Romiſh Hierarchy* who had their dependance upon them.

Object. 4. *Fourthly*, It is *Objected*, That as on the one hand there may be danger of *Error* in following blindly the Belief of the Church, ſo on the other hand there is as great a danger of *Schiſm* in forſaking the communion of the Church upon pretence of *Errors* and *Corruptions*. Very true; but where great *Errors* and *Corruptions* are not only pretended, but are real and evident: and where our *Compliance* with thoſe *Errors* and *Corruptions* is made a *neceſſary Condition* of our *Communion* with that *Church*: In that Caſe, the guilt of *Schiſm*, how great a Crime ſoever it be, doth not fall upon thoſe who forſake the *Communion* of that *Church*, but upon thoſe who drive them out of it by the *ſinful Conditions* which they impoſe upon them.

And this is truly the *Caſe* between *Us* and the *Church* of *Rome*, as we are ready to make good, and have fully done it upon all Occaſions; and they have never yet been able to vindicate and clear themſelves of thoſe groſs *Errors* and *Corruptions* which have been charged upon them, and which they require of all their *Members* as *neceſſary Conditions* of *Communion* with them here, and of *eternal Salvation* hereafter.

For we do not object to them doubtful matters, but things as plain as any are contained in the *Bible*, as every body would ſee if they durſt but let every body read it. The *Worſhip* of *Images* is there as plainly forbidden in the *Decalogue*, as *Murther* and *Adultery* are. The *Communion* in *both Kinds* is as expreſs an *Inſtitution* of our *Saviour*, as any in all the *New Teſtament*; and even as the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* it ſelf; only *that Church* pretends to a *Diſpenſing Power*, as a *Priviledge inherent* in their Church, and *inſeparable* from it.

And, to add but one *Inſtance* more; *Publick Prayers*, and the *Service* of God in an *unknown Tongue*, are as plainly and fully declared againſt by St. *Paul*, in a long *Chapter* upon this ſingle Argument, as any one thing in all his *Epiſtles*.

Theſe things are plain and undeniable, and being ſo, are a full juſtification not only of the *Church* of *England*, in the *Reformation* which She thought fit to make within her ſelf from the groſs *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Church* of *Rome*; but likewiſe of *particular Perſons* who have at any time for the ſame Reaſons withdrawn themſelves from Her Communion, in any of the *Popiſh* Countries: Yea though that *ſingle Perſon* ſhould happen to be in thoſe Circumſtances that he could not have the Opportunity of holding Communion with any *other Church*, that was free from thoſe *Errors* and *Corruptions*, and which did not impoſe them as *neceſſary Conditions* of *Communion*.

For if any *Church* fall off to *Idolatry*, every good *Chriſtian* not only may, but ought to forſake *Her Communion*; and ought rather to ſtand ſingle and alone in the Profeſſion of the pure and true Religion, than to continue in the *Communion* of a *corrupt* and *Idolatrous Church*.

I know that ſome Men are ſo fond of the *Name* of a *Church* that they can very hardly believe that any thing which bears that glorious *Title* can miſcarry or do any thing ſo much amiſs as to give juſt occaſion to any of her *Members* to break off from *Her Communion*: What? *the Church err?* That is ſuch an *Abſurdity*, as is by many thought ſufficent to put any *Objection* out of countenance. That the *whole Church*, that is, that *all the Chriſtians* in the World ſhould at any time fall off to *Idolatry* and into *Errors* and *Practices* directly contrary to the *Chriſtian Doctrine* revealed in the *H. Scriptures*, is on all hands, I think, denied: But that any Particular Church may fall into ſuch *Errors* and *Practices* is, I think, as univerſally granted: Only in this Caſe they demanded to have the *Roman Catholick Church* excepted: And why I pray? Becauſe though the *Roman Church* is a *Particular Church*, it is alſo the *Univerſal Church*: If this can be, and good ſenſe can be made of a *Particular-Univerſal Church*, then the *Roman Church* may demand this high Privilege of being exempted from the Fate of all other Churches; but if the *Roman Catholick*, that is a *Particular-Univerſal Church* be a groſs and palpable *Contradiction*, then it is plain that the *Church* of *Rome* hath no more pretence to this *Privilege*, than any other *Particular Church* whatſoever.

And which is yet more, ſome men talk of theſe matters at that rate, as if a man who thought himſelf obliged to quit the Communion of the *Church* of *Rome*, ſhould happen to be in thoſe Circumſtances that he had no Opportunity of joining himſelf to any other Communion, he ought in that Caſe to give over all thoughts of Religion, and not be ſo conceited and preſumptuous as to think of going to Heaven alone by himſelf,

It is without doubt a very great Sin to deſpiſe the Communion of the Church, or to break off from it ſo long as we can continue in it without Sin: But if things ſhould once come to that *Paſs* that we muſt either diſobey God for company, or ſtand alone in our obedience to Him, we ought moſt certainly to obey God whatever comes of it; and to profeſs his Truth, whether any body elſe will join with us in that Profeſſion or not.

And they who ſpeak otherwiſe condemn the whole *Reformation*, and do in effect ſay that *Martin Luther* had done a very ill thing in breaking off from the *Church* of *Rome*, if no body elſe would have joined with him in that honeſt Deſign. And yet if it had been ſo, I hope God would have given him the Grace and Courage to have ſtood alone in ſo good and glorious a *Cauſe*, and to have laid down his Life for it.

And for any man to be of another Opinion, is juſt as if a man upon great deliberation ſhould chuſe rather to be drowned, than to be ſaved either by a *Plank* or a *ſmall Boat*; or to be carried into the Harbour any other way, than in a *Great Ship* of ſo many *hundred Tuns*.

In ſhort, a good man muſt reſolve to obey God and to profeſs his Truth, though all the World ſhould happen to do otherwiſe. *Chriſt* hath promiſed to preſerve his Church *to the end of the World*, that is, he hath engaged his Word that he will take care that there ſhall always be in ſome part of the World or other, ſome perſons that ſhall make a ſincere Profeſſion of his true Religion.

But He hath no where promiſed to preſerve any *one Part* of his Church from ſuch *Errors* and *Corruptions*, as may oblige all good men to quit the Communion of *that Part*; yea though when they have done ſo, they may not know whither to reſort for actual Communion with any other *ſound Part* of the *Chriſtian* Church. As it happened to ſome particular Perſons, during the Reign and Rage of *Popery* in theſe *Weſtern* Parts of the *Chriſtian* Church.

The Reſult from all this *Diſcourſe* is, to confirm and eſtabliſh us all, in this *Hour of Temptation* and of *the Powers of Darkneſs*, in the well-grounded Belief of the neceſſity and juſtice of our *Reformation* from the *Errors* and *Corruptions* of the *Roman* Church. And to engage us *to hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering*: And not only to profeſs and promiſe as *Peter* did to our *Lord*, *though all men forſake thee, yet will not I:* But if there ſhould be Occaſion, to perform and make good this promiſe with the hazard of all that is dear to us, and even of Life it ſelf. And whatever Trials God may permit any of us to fall into, to take up the pious Reſolution of *Joſhua* here in the *Text*, that whatever others do, *WE will ſerve the Lord*.

I will conclude my *Diſcourſe*, upon this *Firſt Particular* in the *Text*, with the *Exhortation* of St. *Paul* to the *Philippians*: *Only let your converſation be as it becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt. Stand faſt in one Spirit, be of one Mind, ſtriving together for the Faith of the Goſpel: In nothing terrified by your Adverſaries, which to them is an evident token of Perdition, but to you of Salvation, and that of God.* chap. 1. v. 27.

And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to the *Firſt* thing in the *Text*, namely, the pious Reſolution of *Joſhua*, that if there were Occaſion and things were brought to that extremity, he would ſtand alone in the Profeſſion and Practice of God's true Religion: *Chuſe you this Day whom ye will ſerve, but as for ME, I will ſerve the Lord.*

I ſhould now have proceeded to the *Second* thing, and which indeed I chiefly intended to ſpeak to from this *Text*, namely, the *pious Care* of a good *Father* and *Maſter* of a *Family*, to train up thoſe under his Charge in the *Religion* and *Worſhip* of the *true God*: *As for Me and MY HOUSE, we will ſerve the Lord.* But this I ſhall not now enter upon, but defer it to ſome other Opportunity. *Conſider what ye have heard, and the Lord give you underſtanding in all things.*

SERMON L.

Concerning

FAMILY-RELIGION.

Preached at

St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, *July* the 13*th*. 1684.

JOSH. XXIV. 15.

—But as for me and my houſe, we will ſerve the Lord.

I Shall now proceed to the *Second Point* contained in the *Text*, namely,

II. The *pious Care* of a good *Maſter* and *Father* of a *Family*, to train up thoſe under his Charge in the Worſhip and Service of the true God: *As for me and MY HOUSE, we will ſerve the Lord.*

And this is the more neceſſary to be ſpoken to, becauſe it is a great and very eſſential part of Religion, but ſtrangely overlook'd and neglected in this looſe and degenerate Age in which we live. It is a great part of Religion; for next to our *perſonal Homage* and *Service* to *Almighty God*, and the Care of our own Souls, it is incumbent upon us to make thoſe, who are under our Charge and ſubject to our Authority, God's Subjects, and his Children and Servants; which is a much more honourable and happy Relation, than that which they bear to us.

Our *Children* are a *natural* part of our ſelves, and the reſt of our Family are a *Civil* and *Political* part: And not only we our ſelves, but all that we have and that belongs to us is God's, and ought to be devoted to his ſervice. And they that have the true Fear of God themſelves, will be careful to teach it to others; to thoſe eſpecially who are under their more immediate Care and Inſtruction. And therefore God had ſo great a confidence concerning *Abraham* as to this particular, as to undertake for him, that being ſo very good a Man himſelf he would not fail in ſo great and neceſſary a part of his Duty, *For I know him*, ſays *God* of him, *that he will command his Children and his Houſhold after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord, to do Juſtice and Judgment.* God paſſeth his Word for him, that he would not only take care to inſtruct his *Children* and the reſt of his numerous *Family* in the true Religion, but that he would likewiſe lay a ſtrict Charge upon them to propagate and tranſmit it to their Poſterity.

And this certainly is the Duty of all *Fathers* and *Maſters* of *Families*; and an eſſential part of Religion, next to ſerving God in our own Perſons, to be very careful that all that belong to us do the ſame. For every Man muſt not only give an account of himſelf to God, but of thoſe likewiſe that are committed to his Charge that they do not miſcarry through his neglect.

In ſpeaking of this great and neceſſary Duty I ſhall do theſe *four* things.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew wherein it doth conſiſt.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Intereſt*.

Thirdly, I ſhall enquire into the *Cauſes* of the ſo common and ſhameful neglect of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great Decay of Piety amongſt us.

Fourthly, As a *Motive* and *Argument* to us to endeavour to retrieve the practice of this Duty, I ſhall repreſent to you the pernicious *Conſequences* of the neglect of it, both with regard to our *Selves* and to *the Publick*. In all which I ſhall be very brief, becauſe things that are plain need not to be long.

I. I ſhall ſhew wherein the Practice of this Duty doth conſiſt. And in this I am ſure there is no need to be long, becauſe this Duty is much better known than practiſed: ~~The principal *Parts* of it are theſe following.~~

Firſt, By ſetting up the conſtant Worſhip of God in our Families. By *daily Prayers* to God, every *Morning* and *Evening*; and by reading ſome Portion of the *H. Scriptures* at thoſe Times, eſpecially out of the *Pſalms* of *David*, and the *New Teſtament*. And this is ſo neceſſary to keep alive and to maintain a ſenſe of God and Religion in the Minds of Men, that where it is neglected I do not ſee how any Family can in reaſon be eſteemed a Family of *Chriſtians*, or indeed, to have any Religion at all.

And there are not wanting excellent *Helps* to this purpoſe for thoſe that ſtand in need of them, as I think moſt Families do for the due and decent diſcharge of this ſolemn Duty of *Prayer*: I ſay, there are excellent Helps to this purpoſe, in the ſeveral *Books* of *Devotion* calculated for the private uſe of Families, as well as for *Secret Prayer* in our *Cloſets*.

So that beſides the reading of the *H. Scriptures*, which are the great Fountains of *Divine Truth*; we may do well likewiſe to add to theſe other pious and profitable *Books*, which by their plainneſs are fitted for the inſtruction of all Capacities in the moſt neceſſary Points of *Belief* and *Practice*: Of which ſort, God be thanked, there is an abundant ſtore; but none that I think is more fitted for general and conſtant uſe than that *excellent Book* ſo well known by the *Title* of *The whole Duty of Man*: Becauſe it is conveniently divided into *Parts* or *Sections*; *one* of which may be read in the *Family*, at any time when there is leiſure for it; but more eſpecially on the *Lord's Day*, when the whole Family may the more eaſily be brought and kept together, and have the Opportunity to attend upon theſe things without diſtraction.

And, which I muſt by no means omit, becauſe it is in many Families already gone, and in others going out of Faſhion: I mean a ſolemn acknowledgment of the Providence of God, by begging his *Bleſſing* at our *Meals*, upon his good Creatures provided for our uſe; and by returning *Thanks* to him for the benefit and refreſhment of them: This being a piece of *Natural Religion* owned and practiſed in all Ages, and in moſt places of the World; but never ſo ſhamefully and ſcandalouſly neglected, and I fear by many ſlighted and deſpiſed, as it is amongſt us at this Day: And moſt neglected where there is greateſt Reaſon for the doing of it, I mean, at the moſt plentiful *Tables*, and among thoſe of higheſt Quality: As if Great Perſons were aſhamed, or thought ſcorn to own from whence theſe Bleſſings come; like the Nation of the *Jews*, of whom God complains
Hoſ. 2. 8. in the *Prophet*, *She knew not that I gave Her Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, and multply'd her Silver and Gold: She knew not*, that is, She would not acknowledge from whoſe *Bounty* all theſe *Bleſſings* came: Or, as if the *poor*

were obliged to thank God for a little, but thoſe who are *fed to the full*, and whoſe *Cups overflow*, ſo that they are almoſt every day ſurfeited of plenty, were not at leaſt equally bound to make returns of thankful acknowledgment to the *Great Giver* of all good things; and to implore *His* Bounty and Bleſſing, upon whom *the eyes of all do wait*, that *He may give them their meat in due ſeaſon.*

O crooked and perverſe Generation! Do you thus reaſon? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, fooliſh and unwiſe?* This is a very ſad and broad Sign of the prevalency of *Atheiſm* and *Infidelity* among us; when ſo *Natural* and ſo *Reaſonable* a piece of *Religion*, ſo meet and equal an acknowledgment of the conſtant and daily Care and Providence of Almighty God towards us begins to grow out of Date and Uſe; in a Nation profeſſing Religion, and the Belief of the *Being* and *Providence* of God. Is it not a righteous thing with God to take away his Bleſſings from us, when we deny Him this juſt and eaſie Tribute of Praiſe and Thankſgiving? *Shall not God viſit for* this horrible *Ingratitude: And ſhall not his Soul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this? Hear, O Heavens, and be ye horribly aſtoniſhed at this!* I hope it cannot be thought misbecoming the meaneſt of God's Miniſters, in a matter wherein the Honour of God is ſo nearly concern'd, to reprove, even in the Higheſt and Greateſt of the Sons of Men, ſo ſhameful and heinous a Fault, with a proportionable Vehemence and Severity.

Secondly, Another, and that alſo a very conſiderable *Part* of this *Duty*, conſiſts in inſtructing thoſe committed to our Charge in the *Fundamental Principles*, and in the careful *Practice* of the *neceſſary Duties* of Religion; inſtilling theſe into *Children* in their tender years, as they are capable of them, *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*; and into thoſe that are more *grown up*, by proper and ſuitable means of inſtruction, and by furniſhing them with ſuch *Books* as are moſt proper to teach them thoſe things in Religion which are moſt neceſſary by all to be believ'd and practis'd.

And in order hereunto we ſhould take care that thoſe under our Charge, our *Children* and *Servants*, ſhould be taught to read, becauſe this will make the buſineſs of Inſtruction much eaſier; ſo that if they are diligent and well-diſpos'd, they may, after having been taught the *firſt Principles* of Religion, by reading the *H. Scriptures* and other good *Books*, greatly improve themſelves, ſo as to be prepared to receive much greater benefit and advantage by the publick teaching of their Miniſters.

And in this work of *Inſtruction* our great care ſhould be to plant thoſe *Principles* of Religion in our *Children* and *Servants* which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary, and are like to have the greateſt and moſt laſting influence upon their whole Lives: As right and worthy Apprehenſions of God, eſpecially of his infinite Goodneſs, and that *He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity:* And a lively ſenſe alſo of the great evil and danger of Sin: A firm belief of the Immortality of our Souls, and of the unſpeakable and endleſs Rewards and Puniſhments of another World. If theſe *Principles* once take root, they will ſpread ſtrangely, and probably ſtick by them and continue with them all their Days.

Whereas, if we plant in them *doubtful Doctrines* and *Opinions*, and inculcate upon them the *Notions* of a *Sect*, and the *Jargon* of a *Party*, this will turn to a very pitiful account, and we muſt expect that our *Harveſt* will be anſwerable to our *Husbandry: We have ſown the Wind, and ſhall reap the Whirlwind.* But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more particularly and fully in the enſuing *Sermons* concerning *the good Education of Children.*

And this work of *Inſtruction* of thoſe that are under our Charge, as it ought not to be neglected at other Times, ſo it is more peculiarly ſeaſonable on the *Lord's Day*, which ought to be employed by us to Religious Purpoſes, and in the Exerciſes of Piety and Devotion: Chiefly in the *Publick Worſhip* and *Service* of God, upon which we ſhould take care that our *Children* and *Servants* ſhould diligently and devoutly attend. Becauſe there God affords the *Means* which he hath appointed for the begetting and increaſing of Piety and Goodneſs, and to which he hath promiſed a more eſpecial Bleſſing: There they will have the opportunity of joining in the *publick Prayers* of God's Church, and of ſharing in the unſpeakable benefit and advantage of them: And there they will alſo have the advantage of being inſtructed by the Miniſters of God in the Doctrine of Salvation, and the way to Eternal Life; and of being powerfully incited to the practice of Piety and Virtue.

There likewiſe they will be invited to the *Lord's Table*, to participate of the *H. Sacrament* of *Chriſt*'s moſt bleſſed *Body* and *Blood*; which being the moſt *Solemn Inſtitution* of the *Chriſtian* Religion, the frequent participation whereof, is by our *B. Lord*, in remembrance of his *Dying Love*, enjoined upon all *Chriſtians*, we ought to take a very particular care, that thoſe who are under our Charge, ſo ſoon as they are capable of it, be duly inſtructed and prepared for it; that ſo, as often as Opportunity is offer'd for it, they may be preſent at this Holy Action, and partake of the ineſtimable Benefits and Comforts of it.

And when the *Publick Worſhip* of *that Day* is over, our Families ſhould be inſtructed at *Home*, by having the *Scriptures* and other good *Books* read to them; and care likewiſe ſhould be taken that they do this themſelves; this being the chief Opportunity that moſt of them, eſpecially thoſe that are *Servants*, have of minding the buſineſs of Religion, and thinking ſeriouſly of another World.

And therefore I cannot but think it of very great conſequence to the maintaining and keeping alive of Religion in the World, that this *Day* be Religiouſly obſerved, and ſpent as much as may be in the exerciſes of Piety, and in the care of our Souls. For ſurely every one that hath a true ſenſe of Religion will grant, that it is neceſſary that ſome Time ſhould be ſolemnly ſet apart for this purpoſe, which is of all other our greateſt Concernment: And they who neglect this ſo proper Seaſon and Opportunity, will hardly find any other Time for it: Eſpecially thoſe who are under the Government and Command of others, as *Children* and *Servants*, who are ſeldom upon any other Day allowed to be ſo much Maſters of their Time, as upon *this Day*.

Thirdly, I add further, as a conſiderable *Part* of the *Duty* of *Parents* and *Maſters* of *Families*, if they be deſirous to have their *Children* and *Servants* Religious in good earneſt, and would ſet them forward in the way to Heaven, that they do not only allow them Time and Opportunity, but that they do alſo ſtrictly and earneſtly charge them to retire themſelves every Day; but more eſpecially on the *Lord's Day*, Morning and Evening, to *pray* to God for the Forgiveneſs of their Sins, and for his Mercy and Bleſſing upon them; and likewiſe to *Praiſe* Him for all his Favours and Benefits conferr'd upon them from Day to Day.

And in order to this, they ought to take care that their *Children* and *Servants* be furniſh'd with ſuch ſhort *Forms* of *Prayer* and *Praiſe*, as are proper and ſuitable to their capacities and conditions reſpectively; becauſe there are but very few that know how to ſet about and perform theſe *Duties*, eſpecially at firſt, without ſome *Helps* of this kind.

Fourthly and *laſtly*, another principal *Part* of this *Duty* conſiſts in giving *good Example* to our *Families*. This was *David*s Reſolution, *Pſal.* 101. 2. *I will behave my ſelf wiſely in a perfect way, I will walk within my Houſe with a perfect heart.* Take great care to be *exemplary* to thy Family in the beſt things; in a conſtant and devout ſerving of God, and in a ſober and prudent and unblameable Converſation.

One of the beſt and moſt effectual ways to make thoſe who are under our Care and Authority good, is to be good our Selves, and by our good Example to ſhew them the way to be ſo. Without this our beſt Inſtructions will ſignifie but very little, and the main force and efficacy of them will be loſt. We undermine the beſt Inſtructions we can give, when they are not ſeconded and confirmed by our own Example, and Practice. The want of this will weaken the Authority of all our good Counſel, and very little Reverence and Obedience will be paid to it. The Precepts and Admonitions of a very good Man have in them a great power of Perſuaſion, and are apt ſtrongly to move and to inflame others to *go and do likewiſe*: But the good Inſtructions of a bad Man are languid and faint, and of very little force; becauſe they give no heart and encouragement to follow that Counſel which they ſee he that gives it does not think fit to take himſelf. But of this likewiſe I ſhall have Occaſion to ſpeak more fully in the following *Diſcourſes* concerning the *good Education of Children*. And thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken of the *Firſt* thing which I propoſed, namely, wherein the Practice of this *Duty* doth conſiſt. I proceed to the *Second*, namely,

II. To conſider our *Obligation* to it, both in point of *Duty* and of *Intereſt*.

Firſt, In Point of *Duty*. All Authority over others is a *Talent* intruſted with us by God for the benefit and good of others; and for which we are accountable, if we do not improve it and make uſe of it to that end. We are obliged by all lawful means to provide for the *temporal* welfare of our Family, to feed and cloath their *Bodies* and to give them a comfortable Subſiſtence here in the World: And ſurely much more are we obliged to take care of their *Souls*, and to conſult their *eternal* Happineſs in another Life; in compariſon of which all *temporal* Concernments and Conſiderations are as nothing.

It would be accounted a very barbarous thing in a *Father* or *Maſter* to ſuffer a *Child* to ſtarve for want of the *neceſſaries* of Life, *food* and *raiment*, and all the World would cry ſhame upon them for it: But how much greater Cruelty muſt it in reaſon be thought to let an *immortal* Soul, and one *for whom Chriſt died*, periſh for want of *knowledge* and *neceſſary Inſtruction* for the attaining of *eternal Salvation*?

The *Apoſtle* St. *Paul* thinks no words bad enough for thoſe who neglect the *temporal* welfare of their Families, *He that provideth not*, ſaith he, *for his own, eſpecially for thoſe of his own Houſe, hath denied the Faith, and is worſe than an Infidel*, that is, he does not deſerve the Name of a *Chriſtian*, who neglects a Duty to which from the plain Dictates of *Nature* a *Heathen* thinks himſelf obliged. What then ſhall be ſaid for them who take no care to provide for the everlaſting Happineſs, and to prevent the eternal Miſery and Ruin of thoſe who are ſo immediately under their Charge, and ſo very nearly related to them?

We are obliged to procure the Happineſs of our *Children* not only by the *Laws* of *Chriſtianity*, but likewiſe by all the *Natural* bonds of *Duty* and Affection. For our Children are a part of our Selves, and if they periſh by our fault and neglect, it will be a perpetual Wound and Sting to us; their Blood will be upon our heads, and the guilt of it will for ever lye at our doors.

Nay, we are obliged likewiſe in Juſtice, and by way of Reparation, to take all poſſible care of their Happineſs; for we have conveyed a ſad Inheritance to them, in thoſe corrupt and evil inclinations which they have derived from us: And therefore we ſhould with the greateſt care and diligence endeavour to rectifie their perverſe Natures, and to cure thoſe curſed diſpoſitions to evil which we have tranſmitted to them: And ſince God hath been pleaſed in ſo much mercy to provide, by the abundant *Grace* of the *Goſpel*, ſo powerful a *Remedy* for this *hereditary Diſeaſe* of our corrupt and degenerate Nature, we ſhould do what in us lies, that they may partake of the Bleſſing and Benefit of it.

And as to other Members of our Family, whether they be *Servants*, or other *Relations* of whom we have taken the Charge; common *Humanity* will oblige us to be concerned for their Happineſs as they are *Men* and of the ſame Nature with our Selves; and *Charity* likewiſe, as they are *Chriſtians* and *Baptized* into the ſame *Faith* and capable of the ſame *common Salvation*, does yet more ſtrictly oblige us by all means to endeavour that they may be made partakers of it; eſpecially ſince they are committed to our Care, and for that reaſon we muſt expect to be accountable to God for them.

So that our *Obligation* in point of *Duty* is very clear and ſtrong, and if we be remiſs and negligent in the diſcharge of it we can never anſwer it either to God, or to our own Conſciences: Which I hope will awaken us all who are concerned in it to the ſerious conſideration of it, and effectually engage us for the future to the faithful and conſcientious performance of it.

Secondly, We are hereto likewiſe *obliged* in point of *Intereſt*; becauſe it is really for our ſervice and advantage that thoſe that belong to us ſhould ſerve and fear God: Religion being the beſt and ſureſt Foundation of the *Duties* of all *Relations*, and the beſt Caution and Security for the true diſcharge and performance of them.

Would we have dutiful and obedient *Children*, diligent and faithful *Servants?* Nothing will ſo effectually oblige them to be ſo, as the Fear of God and the Principles of Religion firmly ſettled and rooted in them. *Abraham* who by the Teſtimony of God himſelf was ſo eminent an Example in this kind, both of a good *Father* and a good *Maſter* of his Family, found the good ſucceſs of his Religious care in the happy effects of it, both upon his *Son Iſaac*, and his chief *Servant* and *Steward* of his Houſe, *Eliezer* of *Damaſcus*.

What an unexampled Inſtance of the moſt profound reſpect and obedience to the Commands of his Father did *Iſaac* give, when without the leaſt murmuring or reluctancy he ſubmitted to be bound and laid upon the Altar, and to have been ſlain for a Sacrifice; if God had not by an Angel, ſent on purpoſe, interpoſed to prevent it?

What an admirable *Servant* to *Abraham* was the Steward of his Houſe, *Eliezer* of *Damaſcus?* How diligent and faithful was he in his *Maſter's* ſervice? So that he truſted him in his greateſt Concernments and with all that he had. And when he employed him in that great Affair of the Marriage of his *Son Iſaac*, what pains did he take, what prudence did he uſe, what fidelity did he ſhew in the diſcharge of that great Truſt, giving himſelf no reſt till he had accompliſh'd the Buſineſs he was ſent about? God ſeems purpoſely to have left theſe two *Inſtances* upon Record in *Scripture*, to encourage *Fathers* and *Maſters* of Families to a Religious care of their *Children* and *Servants*.

And to ſhew the power of Religion to oblige Men to their Duty, I will add but one Inſtance more. How did the Fear of God ſecure *Joſeph's* fidelity to his *Maſter*, in the Caſe of a very great and violent Temptation? When there was nothing elſe to reſtrain him from ſo lewd and wicked an act, and to which he was ſo powerfully tempted, the conſideration of the great truſt his Maſter repoſed in him, and the ſenſe of his Duty to him, but above all, the *Fear of God* preſerv'd him from conſenting to ſo vile and wicked an action, *How can I*, ſays he, *do this great wickedneſs and ſin againſt God?*

So that in prudence, and from a wiſe conſideration of the great benefit and advantage which will thereby redound to us, we ought with the greateſt care to inſtill the Principles of Religion into thoſe that belong to us. For if the Seeds of true Piety be ſown in them, we ſhall reap the fruits of it: And if this be neglected, we ſhall certainly find the miſchief and inconvenience of it. If our *Children* and *Servants* be not taught to fear and reverence God, how can we expect that they ſhould reverence and regard us? at leaſt we can have no ſure hold of them. For nothing but Religion lays an obligation upon Conſcience, nor is there any other certain bond of Duty, and Obedience, and Fidelity: Men will break looſe from all other Ties, when a fit Occaſion and a fair Opportunity doth ſtrongly tempt them. And as Religion is neceſſary to procure the favour of God and all the comfort and happineſs which that brings along with it, ſo it is neceſſary likewiſe to ſecure the mutual Duties and Offices of Men to one another. I proceed to the *Third* thing which I propos'd, namely,

III. To enquire into the *Cauſes* of the ſo common and ſhameful *Neglect* of this *Duty*, to the exceeding great decay of Piety among us. And this may in part be aſcribed to our Civil Confuſions and Diſtractions, but chiefly to our Diſſentions and Differences in Religion, which have not only divided and ſcattered our *Parochial* Churches and *Congregations*, but have entred likewiſe into our *Families*, and made great diſturbances and diſorders there.

Firſt, This may in good part be aſcribed to our *Civil* Confuſions and Diſtractions, which for the time do lay all *Laws* aſleep, and do not only occaſion a general Licentiouſneſs and Diſſoluteneſs of Manners, but have uſually a proportionable bad influence upon the Order and Government of *Families*; by weakning the Authority of thoſe that Govern, and by giving the opportunity of greater Licenſe to thoſe that ſhould be *governed:* For when *publick Laws* loſe their Authority, it is hard to maintain and keep up the ſtrict *Rules* and *Order* of *Families*, which after great and long Diſorder are very hard to be retriev'd and recover'd.

Secondly, This great Neglect and Decay of Religious Order in Families is chiefly owing to our Diſſentions and Differences in Religion, upon occaſion whereof many under the pretence of Conſcience have broke looſe into a boundleſs Liberty. So that among the manifold ill Conſequences of our *Diviſions* in Religion this is none of the leaſt, that the Religious Order of Families hath been in a great meaſure broken and diſſolved. Some will not meet at the ſame *Prayers* in the *Family*, nor go to the ſame *Church* and

Place of *publick Worſhip*; and upon that pretence take the liberty to do what they pleaſe, and under colour of ſerving God in a different way according to their Conſciences, do either wholly or in great meaſure neglect the Worſhip of God; nay, it is well if they do not at that *Time* haunt and frequent Places of Debauchery and Lewdneſs; which they may ſafely do, being from under the eye of their *Parents* and *Maſters:* However, by this means it becomes impoſſible for the moſt careful *Maſters* of *Families*, to to take an account of thoſe under their Charge how they ſpend their time on the *Lord's Day*, and to train them up in any certain and orderly way of Religion.

And this methinks is ſo great and ſenſible an inconvenience, and hath had ſuch diſmal effects in many Families, as ought effectually to convince us of the neceſſity of endeavouring a greater Union in matters of Religion; and to put us in mind of thoſe happy Days when God was ſerv'd in one way, and whole *Families went to the Houſe of God in Companies*; and *Fathers* and *Maſters* had their *Children* and *Servants* continually under their eye, and they were all united in their Worſhip and Devotion, both in their own Houſes and in the Houſe of God; and by this means the Work of Religious Education and Inſtruction was effectually carried on, and a ſteddy Authority and decent Order was maintained in Families; Men were edify'd and built up in Religion, and *God in all things* was *glorify'd*.

And we may aſſure our ſelves, that till we are better agreed in matters of Religion, and our unhappy and childiſh Differences are laid aſide; and till the Publick and unanimous Worſhip of God do in ſome meaſure recover its Reputation, the good Order and Government of Families as to the great ends of Religion is never likely to obtain and to have any conſiderable effect. Which I hope will make all Men who heartily love God and Religion, to conſider ſeriouſly how neceſſary it is to put an end to theſe Differences; that in our private Families, as well as in the publick Aſſemblies of the Church, we may *with one mind and with one mouth glorifie God, even the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.*

1 Cor. 1. 10. *I beſeech you therefore, Brethren*, as St. *Paul* exhorts the *Corinthians*, *by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no diviſions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgment:* that is, ſo far as is neceſſary to the *keeping of the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*, and to prevent *Diviſions* and *Separations* among *Chriſtians*. I proceed to the *Fourth* and laſt thing I propoſed, and which remains to be very briefly ſpoken to, namely,

IV. The very miſchievous and fatal *Conſequences* of the neglect of this *Duty*, both to the *Publick*, and to *our Selves*.

Firſt, To the *Publick*. *Families* are the firſt *Seminaries* of Religon, and if care be not there taken to prepare perſons, eſpecially in their tender years, for publick teaching and inſtruction, it is like to have but very little effect. The neglect of a due preparation of our Children and Servants at *home* to make them capable of profiting by what they hear and may learn at *Church*, is like an error in the firſt Concoction which can hardly ever be corrected afterwards. So that in this firſt neglect the foundation of an infinite Miſchief is laid; becauſe if no care be taken of perſons in their younger years, when they are moſt capable of the impreſſions of Religion, how can it reaſonably be expected that they ſhould come to good afterwards? And if they continue void of the Fear of God, which there hath been no care taken to plant in them, they will almoſt neceſſarily be bad in all Relations; undutiful

tiful Children, ſlothful and unfaithful Servants, ſcandalous Members of the Church, unprofitable to the Commonwealth, diſobedient to Governours both Eccleſiaſtical and Civil; and in a word, Burthens of the Earth, and ſo many Plagues of Human Society: And this Evil, if no Remedy be applied to it, will continually grow worſe, and diffuſe and ſpread it ſelf farther in every Age, till Impiety and Wickedneſs, Infidelity and Profaneneſs have over-run all, and the World be ripe for its final Ruin: Juſt as it was before the Deſtruction of the Old World, when *the wickedneſs of Man was great upon the Earth*, and *all Fleſh had corrupted their way*, then *the Flood came and ſwept them all away.*

Secondly, The *Conſequences* of this *Neglect* will likewiſe be very diſmal to *our Selves.* We ſhall firſt of all others feel the *Inconvenience*, as we had the greateſt ſhare in the *Guilt* of it. We can have no manner of ſecurity of the Duty and Fidelity of thoſe of our Family to us, if they have no ſenſe of Religion, no fear of God before their Eyes. If we have taken no care to inſtruct them in their Duty to God, it is no-wiſe probable that they will make Conſcience of their Duty to us.

So that we ſhall have the firſt ill *Conſequences* of their Miſcarriage; beſides the *Shame* and *Sorrow* of it: And not only ſo, but all the evil they commit ever after, will be in a great meaſure chargeable upon us, and will be put upon our ſcore in the Judgment of the Great Day. It ought to make us tremble to think with what Bitterneſs and Rage our Children and Servants will then fly in our Faces, for having been the Cauſe of their eternal Ruin, for want of due care on our part to prevent it. In *that Day*, next to *God* and our *own Conſciences*, our moſt terrible *Accuſers* will be thoſe of our own *Houſe*, nay, thoſe that came out of our own *Bowels*, and were not only Part of our *Family*, but even of our *Selves*. But this alſo I ſhall have a proper Occaſion to proſecute more fully in the following *Diſcourſes* concerning the *Education of Children*, to which I refer it.

Upon all theſe Conſiderations and many more that might be urged upon us, we ſhould take up the pious Reſolution of *Joſhua* here in the Text, that *We and OUR HOUSES will ſerve the Lord*: And that, through God's Grace, we will do all that in us lies by our future Care and Diligence to repair our former neglects in this kind.

I ſhall only add this one *Conſideration* more to all that I have already mentioned: If *Children* were carefully educated, and *Families* Regularly and Religiouſly ordered, what a happy and delightful Place, what a Paradiſe would this World be, in compariſon of what now it is?

I beſeech you therefore *Brethren*, that theſe things which I have with ſo much plainneſs and faithfulneſs laid before you, may ſink into your hearts, before it be too late, and whilſt the thing may be remedied; that you may not for ever lament this neglect and repent of it, when the thing will be paſt Remedy and there will be no place for Repentance. *But I hope better things of you Brethren, and things that accompany Salvation, though I thus ſpeak.*

SERMON LI.

OF THE
EDUCATION of CHILDREN.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I Have on purpoſe choſen this *Text* for the ſubject of a Preparatory Diſcourſe in order to the reviving of that ſo ſhamefully neglected and yet moſt uſeful and neceſſary Duty of *Catechiſing* children and young perſons: But I ſhall extend it to the conſideration of the *Education* of *Children* in general, as a matter of the greateſt conſequence both to Religion and the Publick welfare.

For we who are the Miniſters of God ought not only to inſtruct thoſe who are committed to our charge in the common Duties of Chriſtianity, ſuch as belong to all Chriſtians, but likewiſe in all the particular Duties which the ſeveral Relations in which they ſtand to one another do reſpectively require and call for from them.

And amongſt all theſe I know none that is of greater concernment to Religion and to the good Order of the World than the careful Education of Children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires a more prudent and diligent and conſtant application of our beſt care and endeavour.

It is a known Saying of *Melancthon* that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere*; to *bear and bring forth Children*, to *inſtruct and bring them up to be Men*, and *to govern them when they arrive at Man's eſtate. The inſtruction* and *good Education of Children* is none of the leaſt difficult of theſe. For to do it to the beſt advantage does not only require great ſagacity to diſcern their particular diſpoſition and temper, but great diſcretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewiſe continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to Religion and Virtue.

It requires great wiſdom and induſtry to advance a conſiderable Eſtate, much art and contrivance and pains to raiſe a great and regular Building: But the greateſt and nobleſt Work in the World, and an effect of the greateſt prudence and care is to rear and build up a Man, and to form and faſhion him to Piety, and Juſtice, and Temperance, and all kind of honeſt and worthy actions. Now the Foundations of this great Work are to be carefully laid in the tender years of Children, that it may riſe and grow up with them; according to the advice of the *Wiſeman* here in the *Text*, *Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained theſe *two* things.

Firſt, The Duty of Parents and Inſtructers of Children, *Train up a Child*, &c. By *Childhood* here I underſtand the Age of Perſons from their Birth, but more eſpecially from their firſt capacity of Inſtruction till they arrive at the State and Age which next ſucceeds *Childhood*, and which we call *Youth*; and which is the proper Seaſon for *Confirmation.* For when Children have been well *Catechiſed* and inſtructed in Religion, then is the fitteſt Time for them to take upon themſelves and in their own Perſons to confirm that *ſolemn Vow* which by their *Sureties* they made at their *Baptiſm.*

Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, that is, in the courſe of Life that he ought to lead; inſtruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty to God and Men, which he ought to obſerve and perform all the days of his Life.

Secondly, Here is the conſequent fruit and benefit of good Education: *And when he is old he will not depart from it.* This we are to underſtand according to the moral probability of things; Not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good Education of a Child, but that this very frequently is, and may probably be preſumed and hoped to be the fruit and effect of a pious and prudent Education. *Solomon* means that from the very nature of the thing this is the moſt hopeful and likely way to train up a Child to be a good Man. For as *Ariſtotle* truly obſerves, *Moral Sayings* and *Proverbial Speeches* are to be underſtood only ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, that is, to be uſually and *for the moſt part* true. And though there may be ſeveral *exceptions* made and *inſtances* given to the contrary, yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them: But if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, becauſe it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this *Aphoriſm* or *Proverb* of *Solomon* in the *Text*; and ſo likewiſe are moſt of the *wiſe Sayings* of this *Book* of the *Proverbs*, as alſo of *Eccleſiaſtes*: And we do greatly miſtake the deſign and meaning of them whenever we go about to exact them to a more ſtrict and rigorous truth, and ſhall upon due conſideration find it impoſſible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the *Text* may be fully compriſed in the following *Propoſition*.

That the careful, and prudent, and religious Education of Children hath for the moſt part a very good influence upon the whole courſe of their lives.

In the handling of this Argument I deſign, by God's aſſiſtance, to reduce my Diſcourſe to theſe *Five* Heads.

I. I ſhall ſhew more generally wherein the good Education of Children doth conſiſt, and ſeverally conſider the principal parts of it.

II. I ſhall give ſome more particular Directions for the management of this work in ſuch a way as may be moſt effectual for its end.

III. I ſhall take notice of ſome of the common and more remarkable miſcarriages in the performance of this Duty.

IV. I ſhall endeavour to make out the truth of this *Propoſition*, by ſhewing how the good Education of Children comes to be of ſo great advantage and to have ſo powerful and laſting an influence upon their whole Lives.

V. And *laſtly*; I ſhall by the moſt powerful Arguments I can offer, endeavour to ſtir up and perſuade thoſe whoſe Duty this is, to diſcharge it with great care and conſcience.

I. I ſhall

I. I ſhall ſhew more generally *wherein the good Education of Children doth conſiſt*, and ſeverally conſider *the principal* Parts of it. And under this *Head* I ſhall comprehend promiſcuouſly the Duty of *Parents*, and, in caſe of their death, of *Guardians*; and of *God-fathers* and *Godmothers*; though this for the moſt part ſignifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them, becauſe the Children for whom they are *Sureties* are ſeldom under their power: And the Duty likewiſe of thoſe who are the *Teachers* and *Inſtructers* of them: And the Duty alſo of *Maſters of Families* towards *Servants* in their childhood and younger years: And laſtly, the Duty of *Miniſters*, under whoſe *Parochial* care and inſpection Children are as members of the Families committed to their charge: I ſay, under this *Head* I ſhall comprehend the Duties of all theſe reſpectively, according to the ſeveral obligations which lie upon each of them in their ſeveral relations to them. And I ſhall reduce them to theſe *eight* particulars, as the principal parts wherein the Education of Children doth conſiſt.

Firſt, In the tender and careful nurſing of them.

Secondly, In bringing them to be baptiſed and admitted Members of *Chriſt's* Church, at the times appointed or accuſtomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members.

Thirdly, In a due care to inform and inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their Duty to *God* and to their *Neighbour.*

Fourthly, And more eſpecially in a prudent and diligent care to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Vertue.

Fifthly, In giving them good Example.

Sixthly, In wiſe reſtraints from that which is Evil, by ſeaſonable Reproof and Correction.

Seventhly, In bringing them to be publickly Chatechiſed by the Miniſter in order to Confirmation.

Eighthly, In bringing them to the Biſhop to be ſolemnly Confirmed, by their taking upon themſelves the Vow which by their Sureties they enter'd into at their Baptiſm.

I. *In the tender and careful nurſing of Children.* I mention this firſt, becauſe it is the firſt and moſt natural Duty incumbent upon Parents towards their Children: And this is particularly the Duty of Mothers. This affection and tenderneſs, Nature which is our ſureſt guide and director, hath implanted in all living Creatures towards their young ones: And there cannot be a greater reproach to Creatures that are endued with Reaſon, than to neglect a Duty to which Nature directs even the Brute Creatures by a blind and unthinking Inſtinct. So that it is ſuch a Duty as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to Nature, and from which nothing can excuſe but *diſability*, or *ſickneſs*, or the *evident danger* of the *Mother*, or the *interpoſition* of the *Father's Authority*, or ſome very *extraordinary* and *publick neceſſity*.

This I foreſee will ſeem a very *hard Saying* to nice and delicate Mothers, who prefer their own eaſe and pleaſure to the fruit of their own Bodies: But whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think my ſelf obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be ſo faithful as to tell them that this is a natural Duty; †and becauſe it is ſo, of a more neceſſary and indiſpenſable obligation than any *poſitive* Precept of *reveal'd* Religion; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying Sins of this Age and Nation; and which as much as any Sin whatſoever is evidently a puniſhment to it ſelf in the palpable ill effects and conſequences of it: Which I ſhall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to repreſent; that if it be poſſible, we may in this firſt Point of Education, ſo fundamental and neceſſary to the happineſs both of Parents and Children, and conſequently to the Publick Good of Human Society, be brought to comply with the unerring Inſtinct of Nature, and with the plain Dictate of the common Reaſon of Mankind, and the general practice of all Ages and Nations.

Firſt, The neglect of this Duty is a ſort of expoſing of Children; eſpecially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always expoſeth them to manifeſt inconvenience, and ſometimes to great danger; even to that degree as in the conſequence of it is but little better than the laying a Child in the Streets, and leaving it to the care and compaſſion of a Pariſh. There are *two* very viſible incoveniencies which do commonly attend it.

1ſt, Strange Milk, which is often very diſagreeable to the Child, and with which the Child to be ſure ſucks in the natural infirmities of the Nurſe, together with a great deal of her natural Inclinations and irregular Paſſions, which many times ſtick by the Child for a long time after: And which is worſe than all this, it ſometimes happens that ſome ſecret Diſeaſe of the Nurſe is conveyed to the Child.

2dly, A ſhameful and dangerous neglect of the Child, eſpecially by ſuch Nurſes as make a Trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great City: Who, after they have made their firſt and main advantage of the Child, by the exceſſive, not to ſay extravagant *vailes*, which uſually here in *England*, above all other places in the World, are given at *Chriſtenings*: And then then by the ſtrait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nurſing and keeping of the Child; are often tempted, not to ſay worſe, to a great neglect of the Child; which, if it happen to dye for want of due care, ſets the Nurſe at liberty to make a new advantage by taking another Child.

Nor can it well be otherwiſe expected than that a Nurſe, who by this courſe is firſt made to be unnatural to her own Child, ſhould have no great care and tenderneſs for a Child which is not her own.

I have heard a very ſad Obſervation made by thoſe who have had the opportunity to know it) that in ſeveral of the *Towns* and *Villages* about *London*, where this Trade of nurſing Children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of theſe Children lives out the year; And this ſurely is a danger which natural affection as well as duty does oblige Parents to take all poſſible care to prevent.

Secondly, This courſe doth moſt certainly tend very much to the eſtranging and weakning of natural affection on both ſides; I mean both on the part of the Mother and of the Child. The pains of nurſing as well as of bearing Children doth inſenſibly create a ſtrange tenderneſs of affection and care in the Mother. *Can a woman*, ſays God, *forget her ſucking Child, that ſhe* Iſa. 49. 15.
ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb? Can a Woman? that is, a *Mother*, not a *Nurſe*; for the *ſucking child* is ſaid to be *the ſon of her womb*. God ſpeaks of this as a thing next to impoſſible.

And this likewiſe is a great endearment of the Mother to the Child: Which endearment, when the Child is put out, is transferr'd from the Mother to the Nurſe, and many times continues to be ſo for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree as if the Nurſe were the true Mother, and the true Mother a meer ſtranger. So that by this means natural affection muſt be extremely weaken'd; which is great pity, becauſe when it is kept up in its full ſtrength it often proves one of the beſt ſecurities of the Duty of a Child.

But becauſe this ſevere Doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I muſt take the more care to guard it againſt the *Objections* which will be made to it. Thoſe from *natural diſability*, or *ſickneſs*; from *evident* and apparent *danger* of the *Mother*, or from the *interpoſition* of the *Father's Authority*, or from *plain neceſſity*; or if there be any other that have an equal Reaſon with theſe, I have prevented already by allowing them to be juſt and reaſonable *exceptions* from the general *Rule*, when they are real, and not made *Pretences* to ſhake off our *Duty*.

But there are beſides theſe, *two* Objections which indeed are real, but yet ſeem to have too great a weight with thoſe who would fain decline this Duty, and are by no means ſufficient to excuſe Mothers, no not thoſe of the higheſt Rank and Quality, from the natural obligation of it. And they are theſe. The *manifeſt trouble*, and the *manifold reſtraint* which the careful diſcharge of this Duty does unavoidably bring upon thoſe who ſubmit themſelves to it.

1ſt. For the *trouble* of it, I have only this to ſay, and I think that no more need to be ſaid about it; that no body is diſcharged from any Duty by reaſon of the trouble which neceſſarily attends it, and is inſeparable from it; ſince God who made it a Duty foreſaw the trouble of it when he made it ſo.

2dly. As to the *manifold reſtraint* which it lays upon Mothers; this will beſt be anſwer'd by conſidering of what nature theſe *reſtraints* are. And they are chiefly in theſe and the like inſtances. This Duty reſtrains Mothers from ſpending their Morning and their Money in curious and coſtly Dreſſing; from miſ-ſpending the reſt of the Day in formal and for the moſt part impertinent Viſits, and in ſeeing and hearing Plays, many of which are neither fit to be ſeen or heard by modeſt Perſons and thoſe who pretend to Religion and Virtue; as I hope all Chriſtians do, eſpecially Perſons of higher Rank and Quality: and it reſtrains them likewiſe from trifling away a great part of the Night in Gaming, and in Revelling till paſt Midnight, I am loth to ſay how much.

Theſe are thoſe terrible *reſtraints* which this natural Duty, of Mothers nurſing their Children, lays upon them. Now I cannot but think all theſe to be very happy *reſtraints*: Happy ſurely for the *Child*; and in many reſpects happy for the *Father*, and for the whole *Family*, which by this means will be kept in much better order; But happieſt of all for the Mother, who does herein not only diſcharge a great and neceſſary Duty, but is hereby alſo hinder'd from running into many great Faults, which before they will be forgiven muſt coſt her a deep Contrition, and a very bitter Repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone further in this unuſual Argument, than will pleaſe the preſent Age: But I hope Poſterity will be ſo wiſe as to conſider it and lay it to heart. For I am greatly afraid that the World will never be much better till this great Fault be mended. I proceed to the next *Particular* wherein the good Education of Children doth conſiſt, namely,

II. *In bringing them to be Baptized and admitted Members of Chriſt's Church*, at the times appointed or accuſtomed in the National Church of which the Parents are Members. I mean, to bring them to Church to be there publickly *initiated*, and ſolemnly admitted by *Baptiſm*. And this the Rules of the Church of *England* do ſtrictly enjoyn, unleſs the Child be in danger of death; and in that caſe only it is allowed to adminiſter Baptiſm privately, and in a ſummary way without performing the whole *Office*: But then if the Child live, it is ordered that it ſhall be brought to the Church, where the remainder of the *Office* is to be ſolemnly perform'd.

I know that of late years, ſince our unhappy *Confuſions*, this *Sacrament* hath very frequently been adminiſtred in private: And *Miniſters* have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater miſchief of *Separation*, neceſſitated to comply with the Obſtinacy of the greater and more powerful of their *Pariſhioners*; who for their eaſe, or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous *Chriſtening*, will either have their Children baptized at home by their *Miniſter*, or if ye refuſe, will get ſome other *Miniſter* to do it; which is very irregular.

Now I would intreat ſuch perſons calmly to conſider how contrary to Reaſon, and to the plain deſign of the Inſtitution of this *Sacrament*, this perverſe cuſtom, and their obſtinate reſolution in it, is. For is there any *Civil Society* or *Corporation* into which perſons are admitted without ſome kind of *Solemnity*? and is the *Privilege* of being admitted *Members* of the *Chriſtian Church*, and *Heirs* of the great and glorious *Promiſes* and *Bleſſings* of the *New Covenant* of the *Goſpel* leſs conſiderable and fit to be conferr'd with leſs Solemnity? I ſpeak to *Chriſtians*, and they who are ſo in good earneſt, will without my uſing more words about it, conſider what I ſay in this Particular.

III. Another and very neceſſary Part of the good Education of Children is, *by degrees to inform and carefully to inſtruct them in the whole compaſs of their Duty to God*, *their Neighbour*, and *Themſelves*: That ſo they may be taught how to behave themſelves in all the ſteps of their Life, from their firſt capacity of Reaſon till they arrive at the more perfect uſe and exerciſe of that Faculty; when, if at firſt they be well inſtructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themſelves afterwards.

This Duty God does expreſly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar People, the People of *Iſrael*, ſpeaking of the *Laws* which he had given them: *Thou ſhalt*, ſays He, *teach them diligently unto thy Children*, Deut. 6. 7. *and ſhalt talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the way; when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up.* And this God long before promiſed, that *Abraham the Father of the faithful*, would do; *I know Abraham*, ſays He, *that he will command his Children and his* Gen. 18. 19. *Houſhold after him to keep the way of the Lord.*

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the firſt budding and appearance of Reaſon and Underſtanding in Children. So the *Prophet* directs; Iſa. 28. 9, 10. *Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? Whom ſhall he make to underſtand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breaſt: For precept muſt be upon precept*, &c.

To this end we muſt, by ſuch degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themſelves. And in the firſt place we muſt inform them, that there is ſuch a *Being* as *God*, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things? And then, that we are all his Creatures, and the work of his hands, that *it is He that hath made us, and not we our ſelves*: That He continually preſerves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy; and therefore we ought to aſk every thing of Him by Prayer, becauſe this is an acknowledgment of our dependance upon Him; and to return *thanks* to Him for all that we have and hope for, becauſe this is a juſt and eaſie Tribute, and all that we can render to Him for his numberleſs favours and benefits.

And after this, they are to be inſtructed more particularly in their Duty to *God* and *Men*, as I ſhall ſhew more fully afterwards. And becauſe *Fear* and *Hope* are the two *Paſſions* which do chiefly ſway and govern Human Nature, and the main Springs and Principles of action; therefore Children are to be carefully inform'd that there is a Life after Death, wherein Men ſhall receive from God a mighty and eternal Reward, or a terrible and endleſs Puniſhment, according as they have done or neglected their Duty in this Life: That God will love and reward thoſe who do his Will and keep his Commandments, but will execute a dreadful puniſhment upon the workers of Iniquity and the wilful tranſgreſſors of his Laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made ſenſible of the great degeneracy and corruption of Human Nature, deriv'd to us by the *Fall* and wilful tranſgreſſion of our *firſt Parents*; and of the way of our *Recovery* out of this miſerable ſtate by *Jeſus Chriſt*; whom God hath ſent in our Nature to purchaſe and accompliſh the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind, from the Captivity of Sin and *Satan*, and from the Damnation of Hell.

IV. The good Education of Children conſiſts not only in informing their Minds in the knowledge of God and their Duty, but more eſpecially *in endeavouring with the greateſt care and prudence to form their Lives and Manners to Religion and Virtue.* And this muſt be done by training them up to the exerciſe of the following *Graces* and *Virtues*.

Firſt, To *Obedience* and *Modeſty*; to *Diligence* and *Sincerity*; and to *Tenderneſs* and *Pity*, as the general *diſpoſitions* to *Religion* and *Virtue*.

Secondly, To the good government of their *Paſſions*, and of their *Tongue*; and particularly to *ſpeak truth*, and to hate *Lying* as a baſe and vile quality; theſe being as it were the *foundations* of *Religion* and *Virtue*.

Thirdly, To *Piety* and *Devotion* towards *God*; to *Sobriety* and *Chaſtity* with regard to *themſelves*; and to *Juſtice* and *Charity* towards all Men; as the principal and eſſential *Parts* of *Religion* and *Virtue*.

Firſt, As the general *diſpoſitions* to *Religion* and *Virtue*, we muſt train them up,

1*ſt*. To *Obedience*. Parents muſt take great care to maintain their Authority over their Children; otherwiſe they will neither regard their Commands, nor hearken to and follow their Inſtructions. If they once get head and grow ſtubborn and diſobedient, there is very little hope left of doing any great good upon them.

2*dly*, To *Modeſty*, which is a fear of *Shame* and *Diſgrace*. This *diſpoſition*, which is proper to Children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purpoſes. They are *modeſt*, ſays *Ariſtotle*, *who are afraid to offend*, *and they are afraid to offend who are moſt apt to do it*; as Children are, becauſe they are much under the power of their *Paſſions*, without a proportionable ſtrength of *Reaſon* to govern them and keep them under.

Now *Modeſty* is not properly a *Virtue*, but it is a very good ſign of a tractable and towardly *Diſpoſition*, and a great preſervative and ſecurity againſt *Sin* and *Vice*: And thoſe Children, who are much under the reſtraint of *Modeſty*, we look upon as moſt hopeful and likely to prove good: Whereas *Immodeſty* is a vicious temper broke looſe and got free from all reſtraint: So that there is nothing left to keep an *impudent* perſon from Sin, when fear of *Shame* is gone: For *Sin* will ſoon take poſſeſſion of that perſon whom *Shame* hath left. He that is once become ſhameleſs hath proſtituted himſelf. Therefore preſerve this *Diſpoſition* in Children, as much as is poſſible, as one of the beſt means to preſerve their Innocency, and to bring them to Goodneſs.

3*dly*. To *Diligence*, *ſine quâ vir magnus nunquam extitit*, *without which*, ſays one, *there never was any great and excellent perſon*. When the *Roman Hiſtorians* deſcribe an extraordinary Man, this always enters into his Character as an eſſential part of it, that he was *incredibili induſtriâ*, *diligentiâ ſingulari*, of *incredible induſtry*, *of ſingular diligence*; or ſomething to that purpoſe. And indeed a Perſon can neither be excellently good, nor extremely bad without this quality. The *Devil* himſelf could not be ſo bad and miſchievous as he is, if he were not ſo ſtirring and reſtleſs a Spirit, and did not *compaſs the Earth* and *go to and fro ſeeking whom he might devour*.

This is part of the Character of *Sylla*, and *Marius*, and *Cataline*, thoſe great Diſturbers of the *Roman* State; as well as of *Cæſar* and *Pompey*, who were much greater and better Men, but yet gave trouble enough to their Country, and at laſt diſſolved the *Roman* Commonwealth, by their Ambition and Contention for Superiority: This, I ſay, enters into all their Characters, that they were of a vigorous and indefatigable Spirit. So that *Diligence* in it ſelf is neither a *Virtue* nor a *Vice*, but may be applied either way, to good or bad purpoſes; and yet where all other requiſites do concur it is a very proper *Inſtrument* and *Diſpoſition* for *Virtue*.

Therefore train up Children to *diligence*, if ever you deſire they ſhould
excel in any kind. *The diligent hand*, ſaith *Solomon*, *maketh rich*; *Rich* in Prov.10.4.
eſtate, *Rich* in knowledge. *Seeſt thou a man diligent in his buſineſs*, as the Prov. 22.
ſame *Wiſe-man* obſerves, *he ſhall ſtand before Princes*, *he ſhall not ſtand before* 29.
mean, or obſcure *men*. And again, *The hand of the diligent ſhall bear rule*, Prov. 12.
but the ſlothful ſhall be under Tribute. *Diligence* puts almoſt every thing into 24.
our power, and will in time make Children capable of the beſt and greateſt things.

Whereas *Idleneſs* is the bane and ruin of Children; it is the unbending of their Spirits, the *Ruſt* of their Faculties, and as it were the laying of their Minds *fallow*; not as Husbandmen do their Lands that they may get new heart and ſtrength, but to impair and loſe that which they have. Children that are bred up in lazineſs are almoſt neceſſarily bad, becauſe they cannot take the pains to be good; and they cannot take pains, becauſe they have never been inured and accuſtomed to it; which makes their Spirits *reſtive*, and when you have occaſion to quicken them and ſpur them up to buſineſs they will ſtand ſtock ſtill.

Therefore never let your Children be without a *Calling*, or without ſome uſeful, or at leaſt innocent employment that will take them up; that they may not be put upon a kind of neceſſity of being *vicious* for want of ſomething better to do. The *Devil* tempts the active and vigorous into his ſervice, knowing what fit and proper inſtruments they are to do his drudgery: But the ſlothful and idle, no body having hired them and ſet them on work, lie in his way, and he ſtumbles upon them as *he goes about*; and they do as it were offer themſelves to his ſervice, and having nothing to do they even tempt the *Devil* himſelf to *tempt* them, and to take them in his way.

4*thly*. To *ſincerity*; which is not ſo properly a ſingle Virtue, as the life and ſoul of all other Graces and Virtues: and without which, what ſhew of goodneſs ſoever a Man may make, he is unſound and rotten at the heart. Cheriſh therefore this diſpoſition in Children, as that which when they come to be Men will be the great ſecurity and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God an Men.

5thly. To *tenderneſs* and *pity:* Which, when they come to engage in buſineſs and to have dealings in the World, will be a good bar againſt Injuſtice and Oppreſſion; and will be continually prompting us to Charity, and will fetch powerful Arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preſerve this goodneſs and tenderneſs of nature, this ſo very human and uſeful affection, keep Children, as much as is poſſible, out of the way of *bloody Sights* and *Spectacles* of cruelty; and diſcountenance in them all cruel and barbarous uſage of Creatures under their power: do not allow them to torture and kill them for their ſport and pleaſure; becauſe this will inſenſibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them leſs apt to compaſſionate the wants of the poor and the ſufferings and afflictions of the miſerable.

Secondly, As the main *Foundations* of Religion and Vertue, Children muſt be carefully train'd up to the Government of their *Paſſions*, and of their *Tongues*; and particularly, to *ſpeak truth*, and to hate *lying* as a baſe and vile quality.

1ſt. To the good Government of their *Paſſions.* It is the diſorder of theſe, more eſpecially of *Deſire*, and *Fear*, and *Anger*, which betrays us to many evils. *Anger* prompts men to *contention* and *murther:* Inordinate *Deſire*, to *covetouſneſs* and *fraud* and *oppreſſion:* And *Fear* many times awes men into Sin, and deters them from their Duty.

Now if theſe *Paſſions* be cheriſh'd, or even but let alone in Children, they will in a ſhort time grow headſtrong and unruly, and when they come to be men will corrupt the judgment, and turn good nature into humour, and the underſtanding into prejudice, and wilfulneſs: But if they be carefully obſerved and prudently reſtrained, they may by degrees be managed and brought under government; and the inordinacy of them being prun'd away, they may prove excellent Inſtruments of Virtue.

Therefore be careful to diſcountenance in Children any thing that looks like Rage and furious Anger, and to ſhew them the unreaſonableneſs and deformity of it. Check their longing Deſires after things pleaſant, and uſe them to frequent diſappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify them they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to ſubmit to the more prudent choice of their Parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you ſee them at any time apt out of *Fear* to neglect their Duty, or to fall into any Sin, or to be tempted by telling a Lye to commit one fault to hide and excuſe another, which Children are very apt to do: The beſt Remedy of this Evil will be to plant a greater Fear againſt a leſs, and to tell them *what* and *whom* they ſhould chiefly *fear*; *not him who can hurt and kill the Body, but Him who after he hath kill'd can deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell.*

The neglect of Children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their *Paſſions*, is the true cauſe why many that have proved ſincere *Chriſtians* when they come to be Men, have yet been very imperfect in their converſation, and their Lives have been full of inequalities and breaches, which have not only been matter of great trouble and diſquiet to themſelves, but of great ſcandal to Religion; when their light which ſhould ſhine before men is ſo often darken'd and obſcured by theſe frequent and viſible infirmities.

2dly. To the *government of their Tongues.* To this end teach Children *Silence*, eſpecially in the preſence of their *Betters.* And aſſoon as they are capable of ſuch a Leſſon, let them be taught not to ſpeak but upon *conſideration*, both of *what* they ſay, and before *whom.* And above all, inculcate upon them that moſt neceſſary Duty and Vertue of *ſpeaking truth*, as one of the beſt and ſtrongeſt bands of human Society and Commerce: And poſſeſs them with the baſeneſs and vileneſs of telling a Lye; for if it be ſo great a provocation to *give* a man the *Lye*, then ſurely to be guilty of that Fault muſt be a mighty Reproach.

They who write of *Japan* tell us that thoſe People, though mere *Heathens*, take ſuch an effectual courſe in the Education of their Children as to render a *Lye* and *breach of Faith* above all things odious to them: Inſomuch that it is a very rare thing for any Perſon among them to be taken in a *Lye*, or found guilty of *breach of Faith.* And cannot the Rules of *Chriſtianity* be render'd as effectual to reſtrain men from theſe Faults which are ſcandalous even to *Nature*, and much more ſo to the *Chriſtian* Religion?

To the Government of the *Tongue* does likewiſe belong the reſtraining of Children from *lewd* and *obſcene* words, from *vain* and *profane* talk; and eſpecially from horrid *Oaths* and *Imprecations:* From all which they are eaſily kept at firſt, but if they are once accuſtomed to them it will be found no ſuch eaſy matter for them to get quit of theſe evil Habits. It will require great attention and watchfulneſs over themſelves, to keep *Oaths* out of their common diſcourſe; but if they be heated and in paſſion, they throw out *Oaths* and *Curſes* as naturally as men that are highly provoked fling ſtones, or any thing that comes next to hand at one another: So dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in Children to grow up into a *Habit.*

Thirdly, As the *principal* and *eſſential Parts* of Religion and Virtue, let Children be carefully bred up,

1ſt, To *Sobriety* and *Temperance* in regard to themſelves; under which I comprehend likewiſe *Purity* and *Chaſtity.* The government of the *ſenſual Appetite* as to all kind of *Bodily* pleaſures is not only a great *part* of Religion, but an excellent *inſtrument* of it, and a neceſſary *foundation* of *Piety* and *Juſtice.* For he that cannot govern *himſelf* is not like to diſcharge his Duty either to *God* or *Men.* And therefore St. *Paul* puts *Sobriety* firſt, as a *primary* and *principal* Virtue in which men are inſtructed by the *Chriſtian* Religion, and which muſt be laid as the foundation both of *Piety* towards God, and of *Righteouſneſs* to Men. *The Grace of God*, for ſo he calls the *Goſpel*, *that brings Salvation unto all men, hath appeared; teaching us that denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts we ſhould live ſoberly, and righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* It firſt teaches us to live *ſoberly*; and unleſs we train up Children to this *Vertue* we muſt never expect that they will either live *righteouſly* or *godly in this preſent World.*

Eſpecially, Children muſt be bred up to great *Sobriety* and *Temperance* in their *Diet*, which will retrench the fewel of other inordinate Appetites. It is a good *Saying* I have met with ſomewhere, *Magna pars virtutis eſt bene moratus venter*, *a well manner'd and well govern'd Appetite*, in matter of meats and drinks, *is a great part of Virtue.* I do not mean, that Children ſhould be brought up according to the Rules of a *Leſſian* Diet, which ſets an equal ſtint to all Stomachs, and is as ſenſeleſs a thing as a *Law* would be which ſhould enjoin that *Shooes* for all Mankind ſhould be made upon one and the ſame *Laſt.*

2*dly*, To a ſerious and unaffected *Piety* and *Devotion* towards *God*, ſtill and quiet, real and ſubſtantial, without much ſhew and noiſe; and as free, as may be, from all *tricks* of Superſtition, or *freaks* of *Enthuſiaſm*; which, if *Parents* and *Teachers* be not very prudent, will almoſt unavoidably inſinuate themſelves into the Religion of Children; and when they are grown up will make them appear, to wiſe and ſober Perſons, phantaſtical and conceited; and render them very apt to impoſe their own fooliſh Superſtitions and wild Conceits upon others, who underſtand Religion much better than themſelves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things, to ſerve him in private, and to attend conſtantly upon his publick Worſhip, and to keep their minds intent upon the ſeveral parts of it, without wandring and diſtraction: To *Pray* to God as the Fountain of all Grace and the *giver of every good and perfect gift:* And to acknowledge Him and to render *Thanks* to Him, as our moſt gracious and conſtant Benefactor, and the great Patron and Preſerver of our Lives: To be careful to do what He commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden: To be always under a lively ſenſe and apprehenſion of his pure and all-ſeeing Eye, which beholds us in ſecret: And to do every thing in obedience to the Authority of that Great *Lawgiver*, *who is able to ſave and to deſtroy*; and with an awful regard to the ſtrict and impartial *Judgment* of the *Great Day*.

3*dly*, To *Juſtice* and *Honeſty:* To defraud and oppreſs no man; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their Promiſes and Contracts: and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the Equity of that *Great Rule*, which is ſo natural, and ſo eaſy, that even Children are capable of it; I mean that *Rule* which our *B. Saviour* tells us *is the Law and the Prophets*, namely, that we ſhould do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their Caſe and Circumſtances, and they in ours.

You that are *Parents* and have to do in the World, ought to be juſt and equal in all your dealings: In the firſt place for the ſake of your own Souls, and next for the ſake of your Children: Not only that you may entail no Curſe upon the Eſtate you leave them, but likewiſe that you may teach them no Injuſtice by the Example you ſet before them; which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing; becauſe of the preſent worldly advantage which it ſeems to bring, and becauſe *Juſtice* is in truth a manly Virtue, and leaſt underſtood by Children; and therefore *Injuſtice* is a Vice which they will ſooneſt practiſe and with the leaſt reluctancy, becauſe they have the leaſt knowledge of it in many particular Caſes: And becauſe they have ſo little ſenſe of this great Virtue, they ſhould not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and ſport, even when they play for little or nothing: For if they practice it in that Caſe, and be unjuſt in a little, they will be much more tempted to be ſo when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember that *Xenophon* in his *Inſtitution of Cyrus*, which he deſigned for the *Idea* of a well educated *Prince*, tells us this little but very inſtructive Story concerning young *Cyrus:* That his *Governor*, the better to make him to underſtand the nature of *Juſtice*, puts this Caſe to him: You ſee there, ſays he to *Cyrus*, two Boys playing, of different ſtature; the leſſer of them hath a very long Coat, and the bigger a very ſhort one: Now, ſays he, if you were a Judge how would you diſpoſe of theſe two Garments? *Cyrus* immediately, and with very good reaſon as he thought, paſſeth this ſudden Sentence, That the taller Boy ſhould have the longer Garment, and he that was of lower ſtature the ſhorter, becauſe this certainly was fitteſt for them both: Upon which his Governor ſharply rebukes him to this purpoſe; telling him, that if he were to make two Coats for them he ſaid well; but he did not put this Caſe to him as a *Tailor* but as a *Judge*, and as ſuch he had given a very wrong Sentence: For a *Judge*, ſays he, ought not to conſider what is *moſt fit*, but what is *juſt*; not who could make the *beſt uſe* of a thing, but who hath the *moſt right* to it.

This I bring partly to ſhew in what familiar ways the principles of Virtue may be inſtill'd into Children; but chiefly to prove that *Juſtice* is a *manly Virtue*, and that there is nothing wherein Children may be more eaſily miſled, than in matter of *Right* and *Wrong*: Therefore Children ſhould be taught the general *Principles* and *Rules* of *Juſtice* and *Righteouſneſs*, becauſe if we would teach them to *do Juſtice* we muſt teach them to *know* what *Juſtice* is. For many are unjuſt merely out of Ignorance and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

4thly, To *Charity*; I mean chiefly to the poor and deſtitute; becauſe this, as it is an *eſſential* ſo is it a moſt *ſubſtantial* Part of Religion. Now to encourage this Diſpoſition in Children we muſt not only give them the Example of it, but muſt frequently inculcate upon them ſuch Paſſages of *Scripture* as theſe, That *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to viſit the fatherleſs and the widows in their affliction:* That *as we ſow* in this kind, *ſo we ſhall reap:* That *he ſhall have judgment without mercy who hath ſhewed no mercy:* That at the *Judgment* of the *Great Day* we ſhall in a very particular manner be call'd to an account for the practice or omiſſion of this Duty, and ſhall then be abſolved or condemned according as we have exerciſed or neglected this great Virtue of the Chriſtian Religion.

SER-

SERMON LII.

OF THE

EDUCATION of CHILDREN.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Pſal. 101. 2. V. THE good Education of Children conſiſts *in giving them good Example.* This courſe *David* took in his *Family,* as appears by that ſolemn Reſolution of his, *I will behave my ſelf wiſely in a perfect way, I will walk within my houſe with a perfect heart.* Let *Parents* and *Maſters of Families* give good Example to their *Children* and *Servants,* in a conſtant ſerving of God in their Families, which will nouriſh Religion in thoſe that are under their care: And let them alſo be Exemplary in a ſober and holy Converſation before thoſe that belong to them.

And let not your Children, as far as is poſſible, have any bad Examples to converſe with, either among your Servants, or their own Companions; leſt *by walking with them they learn their way and get a blot to their Souls.* There is a contagion in Example, and nothing doth more ſlily inſinuate it ſelf and gain upon us than a living and familiar Pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let Children always have good Examples before them.

Eſpecially, let Parents themſelves be exemplary to them in the beſt things, becauſe their Example is of all other the moſt powerful, and carries greateſt Authority with it. And without this, Inſtruction will ſignifie very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be loſt. We ſhall find it very hard to perſuade our Children to do that which they ſee we do not practiſe our ſelves. For even Children have ſo much ſenſe and ſagacity as to underſtand that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a Man doth truly and inwardly believe. Example is the moſt lively way of teaching, and becauſe Children are much given to imitation, it is likewiſe a very delightful way of inſtruction, and that of which Children are moſt capable; both becauſe it is beſt underſtood, and is apt to make the deepeſt impreſſion upon them.

So that Parents, above all others, have one Argument to be Religious and good themſelves, for the ſake of their Children. If you deſire to have them good, the beſt way to make them ſo is to give them the Example of it in being good your ſelves. For this reaſon Parents ſhould take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your Children will follow you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil Example of Parents is both a temptation and encouragement to Children to Sin, becauſe it is a kind of Authority for what they do, and looks like a juſtification of their wickedneſs.

With what reaſon canſt thou expect that thy Children ſhould follow thy good Inſtructions, when thou thy ſelf giveſt them an ill Example? Thou doſt but as it were beckon to them with thy head and ſhew them the way to Heaven by thy good Counſel, but thou takeſt them by the hand and leadeſt them in the way to Hell by thy contrary Example. When ever you ſwear, or tell a lye, or are paſſionate and furious, or come drunk into your Family, you weaken the Authority of your Commands, and loſe all reverence and obedience to them by contradicting your own Precepts.

The Precepts of a good Man are apt to raiſe and inflame others to the imitation of them, but when they come from one who is faulty and vicious in that kind himſelf they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exerciſe of thoſe Virtues which we plainly ſee they do not practiſe themſelves. It is the *Apoſtle*'s Argument, *Thou therefore that teacheſt another, teacheſt thou not thy ſelf?* Thou that teacheſt thy Children to ſpeak truth, doſt thou tell a lye? Thou that ſayeſt they muſt not ſwear, doſt thou profane the Name of God by cuſtomary Oaths and Curſes? Thou art unfit to be *a guide of the blind, a light to them that are in darkneſs, an inſtructer of the fooliſh, and a teacher of Babes, becauſe thou thy ſelf haſt only a form of Knowledge and of Truth in the Law,* but art deſtitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good Example to your Children you defeat your own Counſels and undermine the beſt Inſtructions you can give them; and they will all be ſpilt like Water upon the barren Sands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

VI. Good Education conſiſts *in wiſe and early Reſtraints from that which is evil, by ſeaſonable Reproof and Correction.* And this alſo is one way of Inſtruction: So *Solomon* tells us, *The Rod and Reproof giveth wiſdom:* And though both theſe do ſuppoſe a Fault that is paſt, yet the great end of them is to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore whatever will probably be effectual for future Caution and Amendment, ought to be ſufficient in this kind, becauſe the End is always to give meaſure to the Means: And where a mild and gentle Rebuke will do the buſineſs, Reproof may ſtop there without proceeding further; Or when that will not do, if a ſharp word and a ſevere admonition will be effectual, the Rod may be ſpared. Prov. 29. 15.

Provided always, that our *Lenity* give no encouragement to Sin, and be ſo managed that Children may perceive that you are in good earneſt, and reſolved that if they will not reform they ſhall certainly be puniſh'd. And provided likewiſe, that your *Lenity* bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the Fault. We muſt not uſe mildneſs in the caſe of a wilful and heinous Sin, eſpecially if it be exemplary and of publick influence. To rebuke gently upon ſuch an Occaſion is rather to countenance the Fault, and ſeems to argue that we are not ſenſible enough of the Enormity of it, and that we have not a due diſlike and deteſtation for it: Such cold Reproofs as thoſe which old *Eli* gave his Sons, *Why do you ſuch things? For I hear of your evil dealing by all this People;* that is, their carriage was ſuch as gave publick Scandal: *Nay, my Sons; for it is not a good Report that I hear, you make the Lord's People to tranſgreſs.* 1 Sam. 2. 23, 24.

Such a cold Reproof as this, where the Crime was ſo great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their Sin; and ſo God interprets it, and therefore calls it *a kicking at his Sacrifice, and a* chap. 2.19. *deſpiſing of his Offering:* And he threatens *Eli* with moſt terrible Judgments upon this very account, *becauſe his Sons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not.*

So that our Severity muſt be proportioned to the Crime. Where the Fault is great, there greater Severity muſt be uſed; ſo much at leaſt as may be an effectual Reſtraint for the future. Here was *Eli's* miſcarriage, that in the caſe of ſo great a Fault as his Sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the Crime, nor to the End of Reproof and Correction, which is Amendment for the future: But he uſed ſuch a mildneſs in his Reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage than reſtrain them in their vile courſes: For ſo the *Text* ſays, that *his Sons made themſelves vile, and he reſtrained them not.*

There are indeed ſome Diſpoſitions ſo very tender and tractable, that a gentle Reproof will ſuffice. But moſt Children are of that temper that Correction muſt be ſometimes uſed, and a fond Indulgence in this Caſe is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and in truth not Love but Hatred. So Prov. 13. 24. the *Wiſe-man* tells us, *He that ſpareth the Rod hateth his Son, but he that* ch. 19. 18. *loveth him chaſteneth him betimes. Chaſten thy Son while there is hope, and* ch. 22. 15. *let not thy Soul ſpare for his Crying.* And again, *Fooliſhneſs is bound up in the heart of a Child, and the Rod of correction ſhall drive it far from him.* chap. 23. 13, 14. *With-hold not correction from the child, for if thou beateſt him with the Rod he ſhall not dye: Thou ſhalt beat him with the Rod, and ſhalt deliver his Soul* ch. 29. 15. *from Hell.* Again, *The Rod and Reproof giveth wiſdom, but a Child left to himſelf bringeth his Mother to ſhame:* He mentions the *Mother* emphatically, becauſe She many times is moſt faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the ſhame and grief of it doth juſtly fall upon her.

So that Correction is of great uſe, and often neceſſary; and Parents that forbear it are not only cruel to their Children, but to Themſelves: For God many times puniſheth thoſe Parents very ſeverely who have neglected this neceſſary piece of Diſcipline. There is hardly to be found in the whole *Bible* a more terrible temporal Threatning than that concerning *Eli* and his Houſe, for his fond indulgence to his *Sons*, who when they came to be Men proved ſuch horrible Scandals not only to their *Father*, but to the *Prieſt's* Office; and to that degree as to *make the Sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the People.* I will recite the *Threatning* at large, for an 1 Sam. 3. 11, 12, 13, 14. Admonition to *Parents* that they be not guilty in this kind; *The Lord ſaid to Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Iſrael at which both the ears of every one that heareth it ſhall tingle: In that day I will perform againſt Eli all things which I have ſpoken concerning his Houſe; when I begin I will alſo make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his Houſe for ever for the Iniquity which he knoweth, becauſe his Sons made themſelves vile and he reſtrained them not: And therefore I have ſworn unto the Houſe of Eli, that the Iniquity of Eli's Houſe ſhall not be purged with Sacrifice nor Offering for ever.* I know very well that this enormous wickedneſs of *Eli's* Sons was committed by them after they were grown to be Men, but this Inſtance is nevertheleſs to my preſent purpoſe, there being hardly any doubt to be made but that it was the natural effect of a remiſs and too indulgent an Education.

Yea very often God doth correct and remarkably puniſh fond Parents by thoſe very Children who have wanted due Reproof and Correction: Of which the *Scripture* gives us a remarkable Inſtance in *Adonijah*, upon the mention of whoſe Rebellion againſt *David* his Father the *Text* takes particular notice of his Father's extreme fondneſs of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cauſe of it: *For his Father had not diſpleaſed him at any time in ſaying why haſt thou done ſo?* And on the contrary, the wiſe Son of *Sirach* tells us, that *he that chaſtiſeth his Son ſhall have joy of him.*

VI. The next thing I ſhall mention as a part of good Education is, *the bringing of Children to be publickly Catechiſed by the Miniſter to prepare them for ſolemn Confirmation.*

It was with a particular reſpect to this work of *publick Catechiſing*, and by way of Introduction to it, that I at firſt propoſed to treat thus largely of the *good Education of Children*, hoping it might be of good uſe to handle this *Subject* more fully than it hath uſually been done, at leaſt to my knowledge, from the Pulpit.

And therefore I ſhall ſay ſomething, and that very briefly concerning the *nature*, and concerning the *neceſſity* and great uſefulneſs of *Catechiſing* Children.

Firſt, For the *nature* of it, it is a particular way of teaching by *Queſtion* and *Anſwer*, accommodated and fitted for the Inſtruction of Children in the Principles of Religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where enjoined in *Scripture*; but *Inſtruction* in general is: And I doubt not but that upon this general warrant *Parents* and *Miniſters* may uſe that way of Inſtruction of Children which is moſt fit and proper to inſtill into them the Principles of Religion. It is true, that the word κατηχεῖν, from whence our word *Catechiſm* doth come, is uſed in *Scripture* to ſignifie *teaching* in general: But it hath ſince by *Eccleſiaſtical* Writers been appropriated to that particular way of Inſtruction which hath been long in uſe in the *Chriſtian* Church, and is commonly called *Catechiſing*.

Secondly, As to the *neceſſity* and great *uſefulneſs* of it; *Catechiſing* hath a particular advantage as to Children: Becauſe they are ſubject to forgetfulneſs, and want of attention. Now *Catechiſing* is a good Remedy againſt both theſe; becauſe by *Queſtions* put to them Children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and muſt give ſome *Anſwer* to the Queſtion that is ask'd: And a *Catechiſm* being ſhort, and containing in a little compaſs the moſt neceſſary Principles of Religion, it is the more eaſily remembred.

The great *uſefulneſs* and indeed the *neceſſity* of it plainly appears by experience. For it very ſeldom happens, that Children which have not been catechiſed have any clear and competent knowledge of the Principles of Religion; and for want of this are incapable of receiving any great benefit by *Sermons*, which ſuppoſe perſons to be in ſome meaſure inſtructed beforehand in the main Principles of Religion.

Beſides, that if they have no Principles of Religion fix'd in them, they become an eaſie Prey to Seducers. And we have had ſad experience of this in our Age; and among many other diſmal effects of our late Civil Confuſions this is none of the leaſt, that *publick Catechiſing* was almoſt wholly diſuſed, and *private* too in moſt Families: For had *Chatechiſing* of Children been continued, it is very probable that this Age would have been infeſted with fewer *Errors* and with fewer *Schiſms*; and that there would not have been ſo much *Apoſtaſie* from the *Fundamentals* of Religion. For it is, I think, a true *Obſervation*, that *Catechiſing*, and the *Hiſtory* of the *Martyrs* have been the *two* great *Pillars* of the *Proteſtant* Religion.

There being then ſo great a *neceſſity* and uſefulneſs of this Way of Inſtruction. I would earneſtly recommend the practiſe of it to *Parents* and *Maſters of Families* with reſpect to their *Children* and *Servants*. For I do not think that this Work ſhould lie wholly upon *Miniſters*. You muſt do your part at home, who by your conſtant reſidence in your Families have better and more eaſy opportunities of inculcating the Principles of Religion upon your *Children* and *Servants*. There you muſt prepare them for *publick Catechiſing*, that the Work of the *Miniſter* may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns *Miniſters*, I intend by God's aſſiſtance, ſo ſoon as the buſineſs can be put into a good method, to begin this *Exerciſe*. And I do earneſtly intreat all that have *young Children* and *Servants*, to bring ſuch of them as are fit to be publickly Catechiſed and inſtructed in the Principles of Religion: And I ſhall as often as ſhall be thought expedient ſpend ſome time in this Work, between *afternoon Prayers* and *Sermon*.

The *Catechiſm* to be uſed ſhall be that appointed in our *Liturgy*, which is ſhort, and contains in it the *chief Principles* of the *Chriſtian Religion*. And I ſhall make a ſhort and plain explication of the Heads of it, ſuitable to the capacity of Children. And becauſe this may not probably be of ſo great advantage to thoſe who are of riper Years and Underſtandings, yet becauſe Children are to be inſtructed as well as Men, I muſt intreat thoſe who are like to carry away the leaſt *profit* to bring with them the more *patience*: Eſpecially ſince I ſhall for their ſakes, in the conſtant courſe of my *Afternoon Sermons*, more largely and fully explain the *chief Principles* of the *Chriſtian Belief*: A Work which you know I have ſome time ago entred upon.

VIII. The *laſt* thing I ſhall mention, and with which the State of *Childhood* ends, is *the bringing of Children to the Biſhop, to be ſolemnly confirm'd*, by their taking upon themſelves the *Vow* which by their *Sureties* they entred into at their *Baptiſm*.

This is acknowledged by almoſt all *Sects* and *Parties* of *Chriſtians* to be of *Primitive* Antiquity, and of very great *uſe* when it is performed with that due preparation of perſons for it, by the *Miniſters* to whoſe charge they belong, and with that ſeriouſneſs and ſolemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very deſirable that *Confirmations* ſhould be more frequent, and in ſmaller Numbers at a time; that ſo the *Biſhop* may apply himſelf more particularly to every Perſon that is to be *Confirmed*, that by this means the thing may make the deeper impreſſion and lay the ſtronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wiſh, both to prevent confuſion, and for the eaſe alſo of the *Biſhop* that his work may not be endleſs, that *Miniſters* would take care that none may preſent themſelves to the Biſhop or to be preſented by the *Miniſters*, to be *Confirmed* a ſecond time: Becauſe a great many are wont to offer themſelves every time there is a *Confirmation*, which is both very diſorderly and unreaſonable, there being every whit as little reaſon for a *ſecond Confirmation*, as there is for a *ſecond Baptiſm*: And if any perſons need ſo often to be *Confirmed*, it is a ſign that Confirmation hath very little effect upon them.

II. I proceed to the *Second* general *Head*, which was *to give ſome more particular Directions for the management of this Work of the good Education of Children in ſuch a way as may be moſt effectual to its End.*

Firſt, Endeavour, as well as you can, to diſcover the particular *temper* and *diſpoſition* of Children, that you may ſuit and apply your ſelves to it, and by ſtriking in with Nature may ſteer and govern them in the ſweeteſt and eaſieſt way. This is like knowledge of the nature of the ground to be planted, which Husbandmen are wont very carefully to enquire into, that they may apply the *Seed* to the *Soil*, and plant in it that which is moſt proper for it:

> *Quid quæq; ferat regio, quid quæq; recuſet.*
> *Hic ſegetes, illic veniunt fœlicius uvæ.*

Every *Soil* is not proper for all ſorts of *Grain* or *Fruit*; one ground is fit for *Corn*, another for *Vines*: And ſo is it in the *tempers* and *diſpoſitions* of *Children*: Some are more capable of one *Excellency* and *Virtue* than another, and ſome more ſtrongly inclined to one *Vice* than another: Which is a great *Secret* of *Nature* and *Providence*, and it is very hard to give a juſt and ſatisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular Tempers of Children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them and manage them to the beſt advantage: That where we diſcern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may caſt in ſuch Seeds and Principles, as, by their ſuitableneſs to their particular Tempers, we judge moſt likely to take ſooneſt and deepeſt root: And when theſe are grown up, and have taken poſſeſſion of the Soil, they will prepare it for the Seeds of other Virtues.

And ſo likewiſe when we diſcover in their Nature a more particular diſpoſition and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we muſt with great diligence and care apply ſuch Inſtructions and plant ſuch Principles in them, as may be moſt effectual, to alter this evil diſpoſition of their Minds; that whilſt Nature is tender and flexible we may gently bend it the other way; And it is almoſt incredible what ſtrange things by Prudence and Patience may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverſe and crooked Diſpoſition.

So that it is of very great uſe to obſerve and diſcover the particular Tempers of Children, that in all our inſtruction and management of them, we may apply our ſelves to their Nature and hit their peculiar Diſpoſition: By this means we may lead and draw them to their Duty in human ways, and ſuch as are much more agreeable to their Temper than conſtraint and neceſſity, which are harſh and churliſh, and againſt the grain. Whatever is done with delight goes on cheerfully, but when Nature is compell'd and forc'd, things proceed heavily: Therefore, when we are forming and faſhioning Children to Religion and Virtue, we ſhould make all the advantage we can of their particular Tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct Nature in the way it will moſt eaſily go. Every Temper gives ſome particular advantage and *handle* whereby we may take hold of them and ſteer them more eaſily: But if we take a contrary courſe we muſt expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctancy.

Such ways of Education as are prudently fitted to the particular diſpoſitions of Children are like *Wind* and *Tide* together, which will make the Work go on amain: But thoſe ways and methods which are applied croſs to Nature are like *Wind* againſt *Tide*, which make a great ſtir and conflict, but a very ſlow progreſs. Not that I do, or can expect that all *Parents* ſhould be *Philoſophers*, but that they ſhould uſe the beſt wiſdom they have in a matter of ſo great concernment.

Secondly, In your inſtruction of Children endeavour to plant in them thoſe *Principles* of Religion and Virtue which are moſt ſubſtantial, and are like to have the beſt influence upon the future government of their Lives, and to be of continual and laſting uſe to them. Look to the *Seed* you ſow, that it be ſound and good, and for the benefit and uſe of Mankind: *This* is to be regarded, as well as the *Ground* into which the *Seed* is caſt.

Labour to beget in Children a right apprehenſion of thoſe things which are moſt fundamental and neceſſary to the knowledge of God and our Duty; and to make them ſenſible of the great evil and danger of Sin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next Life and of the eternal Rewards and Recompences of it. And if theſe *Principles* once take root they will ſpread far and wide, and have a vaſt influence upon all their actions, and unleſs ſome powerful Luſt, or temptation to Vice hurry them away, they will probably accompany them and ſtick by them as long as they live.

Many Parents, according to their knowledge and apprehenſions of Religion in which they themſelves have been educated, and too often according to their Zeal without knowledge, do take great care to plant little and ill-grounded Opinions in the Minds of their Children, and to faſhion them to a *Party*, by infuſing into them the particular Notions and Phraſes of a *Sect*, which when they come to be examined have no ſubſtance, nor perhaps ſenſe in them: And by this means, inſtead of bringing them up in the true and ſolid Principles of Chriſtianity, they take a great deal of pains to inſtruct them in ſome doubtful Doctrines of no great moment in Religion, and perhaps falſe at the bottom; whereby inſtead of teaching them to hate Sin they fix them in Schiſm, and teach them to hate and damn all thoſe who differ from them and are oppoſite to them; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better *Chriſtians* than themſelves.

And indeed nothing is more common and more to be pitied, than to ſee with what a confident contempt and ſcornful pity ſome ill-inſtructed and ignorant people will lament the blindneſs and ignorance of thoſe who have a thouſand times more true knowledge and skill than themſelves, not only in all other things, but even in the practiſe as well as knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion; believing thoſe who do not reliſh their affected Phraſes and uncouth Forms of ſpeech to be ignorant of the *Myſtery* of the *Goſpel*, and utter ſtrangers to the Life and Power of Godlineſs.

But now what is the effect of this miſtaken way of Education? The *Harveſt* is juſt anſwerable to the *Husbandry*,

Infœlix lolium & ſterilis dominantur avenæ;

As they have ſown, ſo they muſt expect to reap; and inſtead of good Grain to have Cockle and Tares: *They have ſown the Wind, and they ſhall reap the Whirlwind*; as the expreſſion is in the *Prophet*; inſtead of true Religion, and of a ſober and peaceable Converſation, there will come up new and wild Opinions, a factious and uncharitable ſpirit, a furious and boiſterous zeal, which will neither ſuffer themſelves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you deſire to reap the effects of true Piety and Religion, you muſt take care to plant in Children the main and ſubſtantial Principles of *Chriſtianity*, which may give them a general *byaſs* to holineſs and goodneſs, and not to little particular Opinions, which being once fix'd in them by the ſtrong prejudice of Education will hardly ever be rooted out.

Thirdly, Do all that in you lies to check and diſcourage in them the firſt beginnings of Sin and Vice: So ſoon as ever they appear pluck them up by the Roots. This is like the weeding of Corn, which is a neceſſary piece of good Husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the Soil it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: But if we watch them and cut them up as ſoon as they appear, this will diſcourage the Root and make it dye.

Therefore take great heed that your Children be not habituated and accuſtomed to any evil courſe. A Vice that is of any conſiderable growth and continuance will ſoon grow obſtinate, and having once ſpread its roots it will be a very difficult matter to clear the Ground of it. A Child may be ſo long neglected till he be overgrown with Vice to that degree, that it may be out of the power of Parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved diſpoſition of Children it will be one of the hardeſt things in the World to give a ſtop to it. It is the *Apoſtle's* caution to *take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulneſs of Sin*, which they who go on in an evil courſe will moſt certainly be. We ſhould obſerve the firſt appearances of evil in Children, and kill thoſe young Serpents aſſoon as they ſtir leſt they bite them to death.

Fourthly, Bring them, as ſoon as they are capable of it, to the *publick Worſhip* of God, where He hath promiſed his more eſpecial preſence and bleſſing. It is in *Zion*, the place of God's publick Worſhip, where *the Lord hath commanded the bleſſing even Life for evermore: There* are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increaſing of Grace in us: This is the *Pool* where the *Angel* uſeth to come and to *move the Waters*: Bring your Children hither, where if they diligently attend they may meet with an Opportunity of being *healed*.

And when they come from the *Church*, call them frequently to an account of what they have heard and learn'd there: This will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their Memories with greater care, and will fix it there ſo as to make a deeper and more laſting impreſſion upon their Minds.

Fifthly, be careful more eſpecially to put them upon the exerciſe and practice of Religion and Virtue, in ſuch Inſtances as their underſtanding and age are capable of. Teach them ſome ſhort and proper *Form* of *Prayer* to God, to be ſaid by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at leaſt every Morning and Evening. A great many Children neglect this, not from any ill diſpoſition of Mind, but becauſe no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and cuſtom of any thing will after a little while make that eaſie and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctancy.

Knowledge and *Practice* do mutually promote and help forward one another. *Knowledge* prepares and diſpoſeth for *Practice*, and *Practice* is the beſt way to perfect *Knowledge* in any kind. Mere *Speculation* is a very raw and rude thing in compariſon of that true and diſtinct knowledge which is gotten by *Practice* and *Experience*. The moſt exact skill in *Geography* is nothing compar'd with the knowledge of that Man, who beſides the Speculative part hath travell'd over and carefully view'd the Countries he hath read of. The moſt knowing Man in the Art and Rules of *Navigation* is no body in compariſon of an experienced *Pilot* and *Seaman*. Becauſe knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere Speculation as the ſkill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For Men may eaſily miſtake Rules, but frequent Practice and Experience are ſeldom deceived. Give me a Man that conſtantly does a thing well, and that ſhall ſatisfie me that he knows how to do it. That *Saying* of our *B. Saviour*, *If any Man will do my will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of my ſelf,* is a clear determination of this matter, namely, That they underſtand the Will of God beſt who are moſt careful to do it. And ſo likewiſe the beſt way to know what God is, is to tranſcribe his Perfections in our Lives and Actions; to be *holy*, and *juſt*, and *good*, and *merciful* as He is.

Therefore when the Minds of Children are once throughly poſſeſt with the true Principles of Religion, we ſhould bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know: Let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to avoid what is evil, in all its ſhapes and appearances, and to practice their Duty in the ſeveral Inſtances of it, than Job 28.28. to *ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and Angels: Unto Man He ſaid, Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wiſdom, and to depart from evil is underſtanding.* 1 Joh.2. 2, 3, 4. *Hereby,* ſaith St. *John, we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments: He that ſaith I know him and keepeth not his Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Xenophon tells us, that the *Perſians* inſtead of making their Children *learned*, taught them to be *virtuous*; and inſtead of filling their heads with *fine Speculations*, taught them *honeſty*, and *ſincerity*, and *reſolution*; and endeavoured to make them *wiſe* and *valiant*, *juſt* and *temperate*. *Lycurgus* alſo in the inſtitution of the *Lacedemonian* Commonwealth took no care about Learning, but only about the Lives and Manners of their Children: Though I ſhould think that the care of both is beſt, and that Learning would very much help to form the Manners of Children, and to make them both wiſer and better Men: And therefore, with the leave of ſo great and wiſe a *Lawgiver*, I cannot but think that this was a defect in his *Inſtitution:* Becauſe Learning, if it be under the conduct of true wiſdom and goodneſs is not only an ornament but a great advantage to the better Government of any Kingdom or Commonwealth.

Sixthly, There muſt be great care and diligence uſed in this whole buſineſs of *Education*, and more particularly in the *Inſtruction* of Children. There muſt be *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there* Iſa. 28.10. *a little*, as the *Prophet* expreſſeth it. The Principles of Religion and Virtue muſt be inſtill'd and dropt into them by ſuch degrees and in ſuch a meaſure as they are capable of receiving them: For Children are narrow-mouth'd Veſſels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they muſt alſo be accuſtomed to the practice and exerciſe of Religion and goodneſs by degrees, till Holineſs and Virtue hath taken root, and they be well ſettled and confirm'd in a good courſe. Now this requires conſtant attendance and even the patience of the Husbandman to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In ſome Children the Seeds that are ſown fall into a greater depth of earth and therefore are of a ſlow diſcloſure, and it may be a conſiderable time before they appear above-ground; it is long before they ſhoot and grow up to any heighth, and yet they may afterwards be very conſiderable: Sir H. W. *Which,* as an ingenious *Author* obſerves, *ſhould excite the care and prevent the deſpair of Parents:* For if their *Children be not ſuch ſpeedy Spreaders and Branchers as the Vine, they may perhaps prove*

——*proles tardè creſcentis Olivæ.*

It is a work of great pains and difficulty to rectifie a perverſe Diſpoſition. It is more eaſie to *palliate* the corruption of Nature, but the *cure* of it requires time and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be cover'd and conceal'd, but it is a great work to conquer and ſubdue it. It muſt firſt be check'd and ſtopp'd in its courſe, and then weaken'd and the force of it be broken by degrees, and at laſt, if it be poſſible, deſtroyed and rooted out.

Seventhly and *Laſtly*, To all theſe means we muſt add our conſtant and earneſt Prayers to God for our Children, that his Grace may take an early poſſeſſion of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations and towardly diſpoſitions for goodneſs: And that he would be pleaſed to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful Aſſiſtance and Bleſſing; without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. *Parents* may *plant*, and *Miniſters* may *water*, but it is *God that muſt give the increaſe.*

Be often then upon your knees for your Children. Do not only teach them to pray for themſelves, but do you likewiſe with great fervour and earneſtneſs *commend them to God and to the power of his Grace* which alone is able to ſanctifie them. Apply your ſelves to *the Father of lights, from whom comes every good and perfect gift:* Beg his *H. Spirit*, and ask Divine knowledge and wiſdom for them of Him, *who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth no man:* Beſeech Him to ſeaſon their tender years with his *Fear*, which *is the beginning of Wiſdom:* Pray for them as *Abraham* did for *Iſhmael, Oh that Iſhmael may live in thy ſight.*

Many Parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themſelves to *Prayer*, earneſt and importunate Prayer to God, as their laſt Refuge. *Monica*, the Mother of St. *Auſtin*, by the conſtancy and importunity of her Prayers, obtained of God the converſion of her Son, who proved afterwards ſo great and glorious an Inſtrument of good to the Church of God: According to what St. *Ambroſe Biſhop* of *Milain*, to encourage her to perſevere in her fervent Prayers for her *Son*, had ſaid to her, *Fieri non poteſt ut filius tot lachrymarum pereat*, *It cannot be*, ſays he, *that a Son of ſo many* Prayers and *Tears ſhould miſcarry.* God's Grace is free, but it is not likely but that God will at laſt give in this Bleſſing to our earneſt Prayers and faithful Endeavours.

Therefore pray for them *without ceaſing, pray and faint not.* Great importunity in Prayer ſeldom fails of a gracious anſwer: Our *B. Saviour* ſpake two *Parables* on purpoſe to encourage us herein: Not becauſe God is moved, much leſs becauſe he is tired out with our Importunity; but becauſe it is an Argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great Goodneſs: And *to them that believe all things are poſſible*, ſays our *B. Lord, To whom*, &c.

SERMON LIII.

OF THE

EDUCATION of CHILDREN.

PROV. XXII. 6.

Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I Proceed to the next general Head which I propoſed, namely,

III. *To diſcover ſome of the more remarkable and common Miſcarriages in the management of this Work:* I do not hereby mean *groſs neglects* for want of *care*, but *miſtakes* and *miſcarriages* for want of *prudence* and *skill*, even when there is no want of care and diligence in *Parents* and *Inſtructors*. And I ſhall for Method's ſake reduce the more conſiderable and common *Miſcarriages* to theſe *three Heads*.

Firſt, In matter of *Inſtruction*.
Secondly, In matter of *Example*.
Thirdly, In matter of *Reproof* and *Correction*.

I. In matter of *Inſtruction*. Parents do very often mainly miſcarry in not teaching their Children the true *difference* between *Good* and *Evil*, and the *degrees* of them: As when we teach them any thing is a Sin that really is not, or that any thing is not a Sin which in truth is ſo: Or when we teach them to lay more ſtreſs and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only *convenient* to be in the higheſt degree *neceſſary*, or that which it may be is only *inconvenient*, or may be an occaſion of *Scandal* to ſome weak Chriſtians, to be a Sin *in its own nature damnable*.

Parents do likewiſe lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to inſtruct them in leſſer things, and as ſtrict in enjoining them, and as ſevere in puniſhing the commiſſion or neglect of them, according as they eſteem them *good* or *evil*, as if they were *the weightier things of the Law* and matters of the greateſt moment in Religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning Parents that have with great ſeverity reſtrained their Children in the wearing of their Hair: Nay, I can remember ſince the wearing of it below their Ears was looked upon as a Sin of the firſt magnitude; and when *Miniſters* generally, whatever their *Text* was, did in every *Sermon* either find or make an occaſion with great ſeverity to reprove the great Sin of *long hair*; and if they ſaw any one in the *Congregation* guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewiſe known ſome Parents that have ſtrictly forbidden their Children the uſe of ſome ſorts of *Recreations* and *Games* under the notion of heinous Sins, upon a miſtake, that becauſe there was in them a mixture of *Fortune* and *Skill* they were therefore unlawful; a Reaſon which I think hath no weight and force in it, though I do not deny but human Laws may for very prudent reaſons either reſtrain or forbid the uſe of theſe *Games*, becauſe of the boundleſs expence both of *Money* and *Time* which is many times occaſioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps, the ſame Perſons, that would not only allow but even encourage their Children to deſpiſe the very *Service of God* under ſome *Forms*, which according to their ſeveral apprehenſions they eſteemed to be *Superſtitious* or *Factious*. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of moſt dangerous conſequence, and have often obſerved it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all Religion.

And how many Parents teach their Children *doubtful Opinions*, and lay great ſtreſs upon them as if they were *ſaving* or *damning* Points; and hereby ſet ſuch an edge and keenneſs upon them for or againſt ſome indifferent modes and *circumſtances* of God's Worſhip as if the very *Being* of a *Church*, and the *Eſſence* of *Religion* were concern'd in them?

Theſe certainly are great *Miſtakes*, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of ſo wide and vaſt a difference as *good* and *evil*, *lawful* and *unlawful*, *indifferent* and *neceſſary*. For when Children come to be Men, and to have a freer and larger view of the World, and ſhall find by the contrary practice of very wiſe and ſerious Perſons, that they have quite different apprehenſions of theſe matters, and do not think that to be a *Sin* which their Parents have ſo ſtrictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times puniſhed them more ſeverely for the doing of it than if they had told a *Lye*, this may make them apt to queſtion whether any thing be a Sin: And the violence which they offer to their Conſciences, and the *ſtrein* that they give them upon ſuch an occaſion, by complying with the general practice of others contrary to the Principles of their Education, doth many times open a gap for great and real Sins.

Beſides, that Children which are bred up in high Prejudices *for* or *againſt* indifferent *Opinions* or *Practices* in Religion, do uſually when they are grown up prove to be Men of narrow and contracted Spirits, peeviſh, and froward, and uncharitable, and many times great *Bigots* and *Zealots* either in the way of *Superſtition* or *Faction*, according to the *Principles* which have been inſtill'd into them to *byaſs* them either way: And very hardly do they ever quit themſelves ſo clearly of their Prejudices, as to become wiſe and peaceable and ſubſtantial Chriſtians.

In ſhort, if we carefully obſerve it, we ſhall find that when Children have been thus indiſcreetly educated, their Religion differs as much from that of ſober and judicious Chriſtians, as the *Civil* behaviour and converſation of thoſe who have been unskilfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themſelves, does from the behaviour of thoſe who have had a more free and generous Education.

II. In matter of *Example*. There are many Parents whoſe Lives are Exemplary in the main, who yet ſeem to uſe too great a freedom before their Children. It is an old Rule, and I think a very good one, *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia,*

There is a very great reverence due to Children. There are many things which are not Sins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all perſons. There are ſome words and actions ſo trivial and light, that they are not fit to be ſaid or done before thoſe for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of Converſation which is only proper among Equals in Age and Quality, which if we uſe before our Superiors and Betters, we ſeem to contemn *them*; if before our Inferiors, *they* will go nigh to contemn us.

It ought to be conſider'd, that Children do not underſtand the exact limits of *good* and *evil*, ſo that if in our words or actions we go to the utmoſt bounds of that which is lawful, we ſhall be in danger of ſhewing them the way to that which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their ſteps, and therefore we will not venture them to play about a Precipice, or near a dangerous Place, where yet Men that will take care may go ſafely enough. And therefore Parents ſhould be very careful to keep their Children from the Confines of Evil, and at as great a diſtance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions ſhould ever be temper'd with gravity and circumſpection, that Children may not ſee or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to Sin, or carry them to the Borders of Vice; leſt they ſhould not ſtop juſt there, but take a ſtep further than you intended they ſhould go.

III. In matter of *Reproof* and *Correction*; many Religious and careful Parents are guilty of *two* great Miſcarriages in this part of Education.

Firſt, Of too much *rigor* and *ſeverity*; which, eſpecially with ſome ſort of Tempers, hath very ill ſucceſs. The firſt experiment that ſhould be made upon Children ſhould be to allure them to their Duty, and by reaſonable inducements to gain them to the love of Goodneſs; by *Praiſe* and *Reward*, and ſometimes by *Shame* and *Diſgrace:* And if this will do, there will be no occaſion to proceed to Severity; eſpecially not to great Severities, which are very unſuitable to Human Nature. A mixture of prudent and ſeaſonable *Reproof* or *Correction* when there is occaſion for it, may do very well; but *Whips* are not *the Cords of a Man:* Human Nature may be *driven* by them, but it muſt be *led* by ſweeter and gentler ways.

Speuſippus cauſed the Pictures of *Joy* and *Gladneſs* to be ſet round about his *School*, to ſignifie that the buſineſs of Education ought to be rendred as pleaſant as may be: And indeed Children ſtand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to Learning and Goodneſs. *Metus haud diuturni Magiſter officii*, ſays *Tully*; *Fear* alone *will not teach a Man his Duty* and hold him to it *for any long time:* For when *that* is removed, Nature will break looſe and do like it ſelf: Beſides, that frequent *Corrections* make Puniſhments to loſe their Awe and Force, and are apt to ſpoil the Diſpoſition of Children and to harden them againſt Shame; and after a while they will deſpiſe *Correction*, when they find they can endure it.

Great Severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended: And many times thoſe who were bred up in a very ſevere *School*, hate Learning ever after for the ſake of the cruelty that was uſed to force it upon them: And ſo likewiſe an endeavour to bring Children to Piety and Goodneſs by unreaſonable ſtrictneſs and rigor does often beget in them a laſting diſguſt and Prejudice againſt Religion, and teacheth them, as *Eraſmus* ſays, *virtutem ſimul odiſſe & noſſe, to hate Virtue at the ſame time that they teach them to know it:* For by this means Virtue is repreſented to the minds of Children under a great diſadvantage, and *good* and *evil* are brought too near together: So that whenever they think of Religion and Virtue, they remember the Severity which was wont to accompany the Inſtructions about it; and the natural hatred which Men have for Puniſhment is by this means derived upon Religion it ſelf. And indeed how can it be expected that Children ſhould love their Duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of *Rods* ſhak'd over them?

I inſiſt upon this the more, becauſe I do not remember to have obſerved more notorious Inſtances of great miſcarriage, than in the Children of very ſtrict and ſevere Parents. Of which I can give no other account but this, that Nature when it is thus overcharged recoils the more terribly: It hath ſomething in it like the *Spring* of an Engine, which being forcibly preſs'd does upon the firſt liberty return back with ſo much the greater violence: In like manner the vicious diſpoſitions of Children, when reſtrain'd merely by the ſeverity of Parents, do break forth ſtrangely aſſoon as ever they get looſe and from under their Diſcipline.

Secondly, Another Miſcarriage in this matter is, when Reproof and Correction are accompanied and managed with Paſſion. This is to betray one Fault, and perhaps a greater in the puniſhment of another. Beſides, that this makes Reproof and Correction to look like Revenge and Hatred, which uſually does not perſuade and reform but provoke and exaſperate. And this probably may be one reaſon of the *Apoſtle's* admonition, *Parents provoke not your Children unto wrath*, becauſe *that* is never likely to have any good effect. *Correction* is a kind of *Phyſick*, which ought never to be adminiſtred in Paſſion, but upon counſel and good advice.

And that Paſſion is incident to Parents upon this occaſion, the *Apoſtle* tells us when he ſays, that *the Parents of our fleſh chaſten us for their pleaſure*; that is, they do it many times to gratifie their Paſſion; *but God* chaſtens us *for our profit*, not in Anger but with a deſign to do us good; And can we have a better Pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate? Heb. 12. 10.

A *Father* is as it were a *Prince* and a *Judge* in his *Family:* There he gives Laws, and inflicts Cenſures and Puniſhments upon Offenders. But how miſ-becoming a thing would it be to ſee a Judge paſs Sentence upon a Man in Choler? It is the ſame thing to ſee a Father in the heat and fury of his Paſſion correct his Child. If a Father could but ſee himſelf in this *Mood*, and how ill his Paſſion becomes him, inſtead of being angry with his Child he would be out of Patience with himſelf. I proceed to the next thing I propoſed, namely,

IV. To make out the truth of the *Propoſition* contained in the *Text*, by ſhewing how *the good Education of Children comes to be of ſo great advantage and to have ſo good and laſting an influence upon their whole Lives.*

I confeſs there are ſome wild and ſavage Natures, monſtrous and prodigious Tempers, hard as the Rocks, and barren as the Sand upon the Seaſhore; which diſcover ſtrong and early propenſions to vice, and a violent antipathy to Goodneſs. Such Tempers are next to deſperate, but yet they are not utterly intractable to the Grace of God and the Religious Care of Parents.

I hope ſuch Tempers as theſe are very rare, though God is pleaſed they ſhould ſometimes appear in the World, as inſtances of the great corruption and degeneracy of Human Nature, and of the great need of Divine Grace.

But ſurely there is no Temper that is abſolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced againſt that which is good. This would be ſo terrible an Objection againſt the Providence of God as would be very hard to be anſwered. God be thanked, moſt Tempers are tractable to good Education, and there is very great probability of the good ſucceſs of it, if it be carefully and wiſely managed.

And for the Confirmation of this *Truth* I ſhall inſtance in *two* very great *Advantages* of a Religious and virtuous Education of Children.

1ſt. It gives Religion and Virtue the advantage of the firſt Poſſeſſion.

2dly. The Advantage of Habit and Cuſtom.

Firſt, Good Education gives Religion and Virtue the *Advantage* of the *firſt Poſſeſſion.* The Mind of Man is an active Principle, and will be employed about ſomething or other. It cannot ſtand idle, and will therefore take up with that which firſt offers it ſelf. So ſoon as Reaſon puts forth it ſelf, and the Underſtanding begins to be exerciſed, the Mind of Man diſcovers a natural thirſt after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes firſt. If it have not the *Waters of Life* and the *pure ſtreams* of *Goodneſs* to allay that thirſt, it will ſeek to quench it in the filthy *Puddles* and impure *Pleaſures* of this World.

Now ſince Children will be buſying their Minds about ſomething, it is good that they ſhould be entertain'd with the beſt things, and with the beſt Notions and Principles of which their Underſtanding and Age are capable. It is a happy thing to be Principled, and, as I may ſay, *Prejudiced* the better way, and that Religion ſhould get the firſt poſſeſſion of their Hearts. For it is certainly a great Advantage to Religion to be planted in a tender and freſh Soil. And if *Parents* be careleſs and neglect this advantage, *the Enemy* will be ſure to *ſow* his *Tares* whilſt the *Husbandman* is aſleep.

Therefore we ſhould prevent the *Devil* by giving *God* and *Goodneſs* an early poſſeſſion of our Children, and by letting Him into their Hearts betimes. *Poſſeſſion* is a great Point, and it is of mighty conſequence to have Nature planted with good Seeds before vicious inclinations ſpring up and grow into Strength and Habit.

I know that there is a ſpiteful *Proverb* currant in the World, and the *Devil* hath taken care to ſpread it to the diſcouragement of an early Piety, *A young Saint and an old Devil;* but notwithſtanding this, a young Saint is moſt likely to prove an old one. *Solomon* to be ſure was of this mind, and I make no doubt but he made as wiſe and true *Proverbs* as any body hath done ſince: *Him* only excepted who was a much *greater* and *wiſer* Man than *Solomon.*

Secondly, Good Education gives likewiſe the *Advantage* of *Habit* and *Cuſtom;* and *Cuſtom* is of mighty force. It is, as *Pliny* in one of his *Epiſtles* ſays of it, *efficaciſſimus omnium rerum Magiſter, the moſt powerful and effectual Maſter in every kind.* It is an acquired and a ſort of *Second* Nature, and next to Nature it ſelf a principle of greateſt power. Cuſtom bears a huge ſway in all Human actions. Men love thoſe things and do them with eaſe to which they have been long inured and accuſtomed. And on the contrary Men go againſt Cuſtom with great regret and uneaſineſs.

And among all others, *that* Cuſtom is moſt ſtrong which is begun in Childhood: And we ſee in Experience the ſtrange power of Education in forming perſons to Religion and Virtue. Now Education is nothing but certain Cuſtoms planted in Childhood, and which have taken deep Root whilſt Nature was tender.

We ſee likewiſe in common experience how dangerous an evil Habit and Cuſtom is, and how hard to be alter'd. Therefore the *Cretians,* when they would curſe a Man to purpoſe, wiſh'd that the *Gods* would engage him in ſome *bad Cuſtom*, looking upon a Man after that to be irrecoverably loſt. So on the other Side, to be engaged in a *good Cuſtom* is an unſpeakble advantage; eſpecially for Children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous courſe, before the Habits of Sin and Vice have taken root and are confirm'd in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: But yet this ought not to diſcourage us, becauſe it is certain in Experience that a contrary *Cuſtom* hath done much in many Caſes, even where *Nature* hath been ſtrongly inclined the other way. *Demoſthenes* did by great Reſolution and almoſt infinite Pains, and after a long Habit, alter the natural imperfection of his Speech, and in deſpite of Nature became the moſt eloquent Men perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a *Demonſtration*, for *what hath been done may be done.*

So that it is not univerſally true which *Ariſtotle* ſays, *That Nature cannot be altered.* It is true indeed in the Inſtance in which he gives of throwing a Stone upward; you cannot, ſays he, by any Cuſtom, nay though you fling it up never ſo often, teach a Stone to aſcend of it ſelf: And ſo it is in many other Inſtances in which *Nature* is *peremptory*: But Nature is not always ſo; but ſometimes hath a great latitude: As we ſee in young Trees, which though they naturally grow ſtraight up, yet being gently bent may be made to grow any way. But above all, *Moral* inclinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are ſubject to the power of a contrary Cuſtom.

Indeed Children when they come to be Men ſhould take great care, that they do not owe their Religion only to *Cuſtom*; but they ſhould upon conſideration and due examination of the grounds of it, ſo far as they are capable of doing it, make it their *Choice.* And yet for all that we muſt not deny the beſt Religion in the World this greateſt advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happineſs for Children to be inclin'd to that which when they come to underſtand themſelves they would make their Choice, if they were indifferent: But an indifferency cannot be preſerved in Children: And therefore, ſince they will certainly be *biaſſed* one way or other, there is all the reaſon in the World why we ſhould endeavour to *byaſs* them the better way. Parents may often miſtake about what is beſt, but if they love their Children they cannot but wiſh and endeavour that they may be good and do what is beſt.

I come now to the *laſt Head* I propoſed, which was,

V. To endeavour by the moſt powerful *Arguments* I can offer, *to ſtir up and perſuade thoſe whoſe duty this is, to diſcharge it with great Care and Conſcience.*

If the foregoing *Diſcourſe* be true, what can be ſaid to thoſe who are guilty in the higheſt degree of the groſs neglect of this great Duty? Who, neither by *Inſtruction*, nor *Example*, nor *Reſtraint* from evil, do endeavour to make their Children good. Some Parents are ſuch *Monſters*, I had almoſt ſaid *Devils*, as not to know how *to give good things to their Children*; but inſtead of *bread* give them a *ſtone*, inſtead of *fiſh* give them a *ſerpent*, inſtead of an *egg* give them a *ſcorpion*, as our *Saviour* expreſſeth it.

Theſe are *evil* indeed, who train up their Children for ruin and deſtruction; in the ſervice of the *Devil*, and in the Trade and Myſtery of iniquity: Who inſtead of teaching them the *Fear of the Lord*, infuſe into them the Principles of *Atheiſm*, and *Irreligion*, and *Prophaneneſs*: Inſtead of teaching them to love and reverence Religion, they teach them to hate and deſpiſe it, and to *make a mock* both of *Sin* and *Holineſs*: Inſtead of training them up in the knowledge of the *H. Scriptures which are able to make* men *wiſe unto Salvation*, they do *ædificare ad Gehennam, they edifie them for Hell*, by teaching them to prophane that *Holy Book*, and to abuſe the *Word of God* which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into Jeſt and Raillery: Inſtead of teaching them to *Pray* and to *bleſs* the *Name of God*, they teach them to *Blaſpheme* that *Great and terrible Name*, and to *prophane* it by their continual *Oaths* and *Imprecations*: And inſtead of bringing them to *God's Church*, they carry them to the *Devil's Chappels*, to *Playhouſes* and Places of *debauchery*, thoſe *Schools* and *Nurſeries* of *Lewdneſs* and *Vice*.

Thus they, who ought to be the great *Teachers* and *Examples* of *Holineſs* and *Virtue*, are the chief *Encouragers* and *Patterns* of *Vice* and *Wickedneſs* in their Children; and inſtead of *reſtraining* them from Evil, they *countenance* them in it, and check all forward inclinations to Goodneſs; till at laſt they make them *ten times more the Children of Wrath*, than they were by that *corrupt Nature* which they derived from them; and hereby *treaſure up*, both for their Children and *themſelves*, *wrath againſt the Day of wrath and the Revelations of the righteous Judgments of God*.

But I hope there are few or none *ſuch* here. They do not uſe to frequent God's Houſe and Worſhip. And therefore I ſhall apply my ſelf to thoſe who are not ſo notoriouſly guilty in this kind, though they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good Education of their Children. And for the greater conviction of ſuch Parents, I ſhall offer to them the following *Conſiderations*.

Firſt, Conſider what a ſad *Inheritance* you have conveyed to your Children. You have tranſmitted to them corrupt and depraved Natures, evil and vicious Inclinations: You have begotten them in your own Image and likeneſs, ſo that *by Nature* they are *Children of wrath*. Now methinks Parents that have a due ſenſe of this ſhould be very ſolicitous, by the beſt means they can uſe, to free them from that *Curſe*; by endeavouring to correct thoſe perverſe diſpoſitions and curſed inclinations which they have tranſmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken Eſtate which from you is deſcended upon them.

When a Man hath by *Treaſon tainted* his *Blood* and *forfeited* his *Eſtate*, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his Children, and think of the Injury hath been done to them by his Fault? And how ſolicitous is he, before he dye, to petition the *King* for favour to his Children? How earneſtly doth he charge his Friends to be careful of them and kind to them? That by theſe means he may make the beſt reparation he can of their *Fortune* which hath been ruin'd by his *Fault*.

And have Parents ſuch a tenderneſs for their Children, in reference to their Eſtate and Condition in this World; and have they none for the good eſtate of their Souls and their eternal Condition in another World? If you are ſenſible that their *Blood* is tainted, and that their beſt *Fortunes* are ruin'd by your ſad *Miſfortune*; Why do you not beſtir your ſelves for the repairing of God's Image in them? Why do you not *travel in birth till Chriſt be formed in them*? Why do you not pray earneſtly to *God* and give *Him* no reſt, who hath *reprieved* and it may be pardoned *you*, that He would extend his Grace to *them* alſo, and grant them the Bleſſings of his *New Covenant*?

All your Children are begotten of the *Bond-woman*; therefore we ſhould pray as *Abraham* did, *O that Iſhmael may live in thy ſight*: O that theſe Sons of *Hagar* may be Heirs of a Bleſſing.

Secondly, Conſider in the next place, that good Education is the very beſt Inheritance that you can leave to your Children. It is a wiſe *Saying* of *Solomon*, that *Wiſdom is good with an Inheritance*; but ſurely an *Inheritance* without Eccl. 7. 11.

out *Wiſdom* and *Virtue* to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many Parents are there who omit no Care and Induſtry to get an Eſtate that they may leave it to their Children, but uſe no means to form their Minds and Manners for the right uſe and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great Poverty and Straits?

Doſt thou love thy Child? This is true love to any one, to do the beſt for him we can. Of all your toil and labour for your Children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good Education. All other things are uncertain. You may raiſe your Children to *Honour*, and ſettle a Noble *Eſtate* upon them to ſupport it: You may leave them, as you think, to faithful *Guardians*, and by kindneſs and obligation procure them many *Friends*: And when you have done all this, their *Guardians* may prove unfaithful and treacherous, and in the Changes and Revolutions of the World their *Honours* may ſlip from under them, and their *Riches may take to themſelves wings and fly away*: And when theſe are gone, and they come to be nipp'd with the Froſts of Adverſity, their *Friends* will fall off like leaves in *Autumn*. *This is a ſore evil*, which yet *I have ſeen under the Sun*.

But if the good Education of your Children hath made them wiſe and virtuous, you have provided an Inheritance for them which is out of the reach of Fortune, and *cannot be taken from them*. *Crates* the *Philoſopher* uſed to ſtand in the higheſt Places of the City, and to cry out to the Inhabitants, *O ye People! why do you toil to get Eſtates for your Children, when you take no care of their Education?* This is, as *Diogenes* ſaid, to take care of the *Shooe*, but none of the *Foot* that is to wear it; to take great pains for an *Eſtate* for your Children, but none at all to teach them how to uſe it; that is, to take great care to undoe them, but none to make them happy.

Thirdly, Conſider that by a careful and Religious Education of your Children you provide for your own Comfort and Happineſs. However they happen to prove, *you* will have the comfort of a good Conſcience and of having done your Duty. If they be good, they are matter of great Comfort and Joy to their Parents. *A wiſe Son*, ſaith *Solomon*, *maketh a glad father*. It is a great ſatisfaction to ſee that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and Induſtry, and that the work of our hands doth proſper. The *Son* of *Sirach*, among ſeveral things for which he reckons a Man happy, mentions this in the firſt place, *He that hath joy of his Children*. Eccluſ. 25. 7.

On the contrary, in wicked Children the honour of a Family fails, our Name withers, and in the next Generation will quite be blotted out: Whereas a hopeful Poſterity is a proſpect of a kind of *Eternity*. We cannot leave a better and more laſting *Monument* of our ſelves, than in wiſe and virtuous Children. *Buildings* and *Books* are but *dead* things in compariſon of theſe *living Memorials* of our Selves.

By the good Education of your Children you provide for your Selves ſome of the beſt Comforts both for this World and the other. For *this World*; and that at ſuch a Time when you moſt ſtand in need of Comfort, I mean the Time of *Sickneſs* and *old Age*. Wiſe Men have been wont to lay up ſome *præſidia Senectutis*, ſomething to ſupport them in that gloomy and melancholy Time, as *Books* and *Friends*, or the like. But there is no ſuch external Comfort at ſuch a Time as good and dutiful Children. They will *then* be the *light of our Eyes*, and the *Cordial* of our fainting Spirits; and will recompence all our former care of *them* by their preſent care of *us*: And when we are decaying and withering away, we ſhall have the pleaſure to ſee our

Youth as it were *renewed*, and our ſelves flouriſhing again in our Children. The *Son of Sirach* ſpeaking of the comfort which a good Father hath in a well educated Son, *Though he dye*, ſays he, *yet he is as if he were not dead, for he hath left one behind him that is like himſelf. While he lived he ſaw and rejoiced in him, and when he died he was not ſorrowful.* Eccluſ. 30. 4, 5.

Whereas, on the contrary, *a fooliſh Son is*, as *Solomon* tells us, *a heavineſs to his Mother*, the miſcarriage of a Child being apt moſt tenderly to affect the *Mother*. Such Parents as neglect their Children, do as it were provide ſo many *Pains* and *Aches* for themſelves againſt they come to be *Old*. And rebellious Children are to their infirm and aged Parents ſo many aggravations of an evil Day, ſo many burthens of their Age: They help to bow them down and to bring *their gray hairs* ſo much the ſooner *with ſorrow to the grave*. They do uſually repay their Parents all the neglects of their Education by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good Children will likewiſe be an unſpeakable *Comfort* to us in the *Other World*. When we come to appear before God at the *Day of Judgment*, to be able to ſay to *Him*, *Lo! here am I and the Children which thou haſt given me:* How will this comfort our Hearts, and make us lift up our Heads with joy in *that Day?*

Fourthly, Conſider that the ſureſt Foundation of the publick welfare and happineſs is laid in the good Education of Children. *Families* are increaſed by *Children*, and *Cities* and *Nations* are made up of *Families*. And this is a matter of ſo great concernment both to *Religion* and the *Civil* happineſs of a Nation, that anciently the beſt conſtituted *Commonwealths* did commit this care to the *Magiſtrate* more than to *Parents*.

When *Antipater* demanded of the *Spartans* fifty of their Children for *Hoſtages*, they offer'd rather to deliver to Him twice as many Men; ſo much did they value the loſs of their *Country*'s Education. But now amongſt us this Work lies chiefly upon *Parents*. There are ſeveral ways of reforming Men; by the *Laws* of the *Civil Magiſtrate*, and by the publick *Preaching* of *Miniſters*. But the moſt likely and hopeful Reformation of the World muſt begin with *Children*. Wholſome *Laws* and good *Sermons* are but ſlow and late ways: The timely and the moſt compendious way is good Education. This may be an effectual *Prevention* of evil, whereas all after-ways are but *Remedies*, which do always ſuppoſe ſome neglect and omiſſion of timely care.

And becauſe our *Laws* leave ſo much to Parents, our Care ſhould be ſo much the greater: and we ſhould remember that we bring up our Children for the *Publick*, and that if they live to be *Men*, as they come out of our hands they will prove a publick Happineſs or Miſchief to the Age. So that we can no way better deſerve of Mankind and be greater Benefactors to the World, than by Peopling it with a *Righteous Off-ſpring*. Good Children are the hopes of Poſterity, and we cannot leave the World a better *Legacy* than well-diſciplin'd Children. This gives the World the beſt Security that Religion will be propagated to Poſterity, and that the *Generations to come* ſhall know God, and *the Children that are to be born ſhall fear the Lord.*

This was the great Glory of *Abraham*, next to his being *the Friend of God*, that he was the *Father of the Faithful.* And the careful Education of Children, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, is ſo honourable to Parents, that God himſelf would not paſs it by in *Abraham* without ſpecial mention of it to his everlaſting commendation: *I know Abraham*, ſays *God*, *that he will command his Children and his Houſhold after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do Juſtice and Judgment.* Gen. 18. 19.

Fifthly, Conſider yet further, the great Evils conſequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in *this*, the final miſcarriage and ruin of Children. Do but leave depraved corrupt Nature to its ſelf, and it will take its own courſe, and the end of it in all probability will be miſerable.

If the generous Seeds of Religion and Virtue be not carefully ſown in the tender Minds of Children, and thoſe Seeds be not cultivated by good Education, there will certainly ſpring up *Briars* and *Thorns*, of which Parents will not only feel the inconvenience, but every body elſe that comes near them.

Neglectis urenda filix innaſcitur Agris.

If the Ground be not planted with ſomething that is good, it will bring forth that which is either uſeleſs or hurtful, or both; For *Nature* is ſeldom barren, it will either bring forth *uſeful Plants*, or *Weeds*.

We are naturally inclined to Evil, and the neglect of Education puts Children upon a kind of neceſſity of becoming what they are naturally inclin'd to be. Do but let them alone, and they will ſoon be habituated to Sin and Vice. And when they are once accuſtomed to do evil, they have loſt their Liberty and Choice: They are then hardly capable of good counſel and inſtruction: Or if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound in the chains of their Sins, and *led captive by Satan at his pleaſure*. And when they have brought themſelves into this condition, their *Ruin* ſeems to be *ſealed*, and without a Miracle of God's Grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the miſchief of this neglect end here, but it extends it ſelf to the *Publick*, and to *Poſterity*. If we neglect the good Education of our Children, they will in all probability prove bad Men; and *theſe* will neglect their Children; and ſo the Foundation of an endleſs Miſchief is laid; and our Poſterity will be bad Members both of Church and Commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of *Inſtruction*, they will either be *ignorant* or *erroneous*: Either they will not mind Religion, or they will diſturb the Church with new and wild Opinions: And I fear, that the neglect of inſtructing and *Catechiſing* Youth, of which this Age hath been ſo groſly guilty, hath made it ſo fruitful of Errors and ſtrange Opinions.

But if beſides *this*, no care be taken of their *Lives* and *Manners*, they will become burthens of the Earth, and Peſts of Human Society, and ſo much Poiſon and Infection let abroad into the World.

Sitxhly and *Laſtly*, Parents ſhould often conſider that the neglect of this Duty will not only involve them in the *inconvenience*, and *ſhame*, and *ſorrow*, of their Childrens miſcarriage, but in a great meaſure in the *guilt* of it: They will have a great ſhare in all the Evil they do, and be in ſome ſort chargeable with all the Sins they commit. If the Children bring forth wild and ſowr Grapes, the Parents teeth will be ſet on edge.

The temporal miſchiefs and inconveniences which come from the careleſs Education of Children as to *Credit*, *Health* and *Eſtate*, all which do uſually ſuffer by the vicious and lewd courſes of your Children; theſe methinks ſhould awaken your *care* and *diligence*: But what is this to the *guilt* which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedneſs will be put upon your ſcore; and poſſibly the Sins, which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other World, and bring new fewel to Hell, to heat that Furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that *Parents* muſt one Day be accountable for all their neglects of their *Children:* And ſo likewiſe ſhall *Miniſters* and *Maſters* of *Families* for their *People* and *Servants*, ſo far as they had the Charge of them.

And what will Parents be able to ſay to God at the Day of Judgment for all their neglects of their Children, in matter of *Inſtruction*, and *Example*, and *Reſtraint* from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God ſhall ariſe terribly to Judgment, and ſay to you, *Behold! the Children which I have given you; They were ignorant, and you inſtructed them not; They made themſelves vile, and you reſtrained them not: Why did not you teach them at Home, and bring them to Church to the publick Ordinances and Worſhip of God, and train them up to the exerciſe of Piety and Devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them good Inſtruction, but you gave them bad Example: And lo! they have followed you to Hell, to be an addition to your Torment there.*

Unnatural Wretches! that have thus neglected, and by your neglect deſtroyed thoſe, whoſe Happineſs by ſo many bonds of Duty and Affection you were obliged to procure: Behold! the Books are now open, and there is not one Prayer upon Record that ever you put up for your Children: There is no Memorial, no not ſo much as of one Hour that ever was ſeriouſly ſpent to train them up to a ſenſe of God, and to the knowledge of their Duty: But on the contrary it appears, that you have many ways contrived their Miſery, and contributed to their Ruin, and help'd forward their Damnation. How could you be thus unnatural? How could you thus hate your own Fleſh, and hate your own Souls? How much better had it been for them, and how much better for you, that they had never been born?

Would not ſuch a heavy Charge as this make every joint of you to tremble? Will it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very Souls, to have your Children challenge you in *that Day*, and ſay to you one by one, *Had you been as careful to teach me the good knowledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it: Had you been but as forward to inſtruct me in my Duty, as I was ready to have hearken'd to it, it had not been with me as it is at this Day: I had not now ſtood trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal Doom which is juſt ready to be paſs'd upon me. Curſed be the Man that begat me, and the Paps that gave me ſuck. 'Tis to You that I muſt in a great meaſure owe my everlaſting undoing.* Would it not ſtrike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our Children in *that great and terrible Day of the Lord?*

I am not able to make ſo dreadful a repreſentation of this matter as it deſerves. But I would by all this, if it be poſſible, awaken Parents to a ſenſe of their Duty, and terrify them out of this groſs and ſhameful neglect which ſo many are guilty of. For when I ſeriouſly conſider how ſupinely remiſs and unconcerned many Parents are as to the Religious Education of their Children, I cannot but think of that *Saying* of *Auguſtus* concerning *Herod*, *Better be his Dog than his Child:* I think it was ſpoken to another purpoſe, but is true likewiſe to the purpoſe I am ſpeaking of: Better to be ſome Men's *Dogs*, or *Hawks*, or *Horſes*, than their *Children:* For they take a greater care to breed and train up *theſe* to their ſeveral ends and uſes, than to breed up their *Children* for eternal Happineſs.

Upon all theſe accounts, *Train up a Child in the way he ſhould go, that when he is old he may not depart from it:* That neither your Children may be miſerable by your Fault, nor you by the neglect of ſo natural and neceſſary a Duty towards them. God grant that all that are concerned may lay theſe things ſeriouſly to heart: For his mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*; To *Whom*, with *Thee O Father*, and the *Holy Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory both now and ever. *Amen.*

SERMON LIV.

OF THE

Advantages of an Early PIETY.

Preached in the
Church of St. *Lawrence-Jewry*, in the Year, 1662.

ECCLES. XII. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay I have no pleaſure in them.

IN the former *Diſcourſes*, concerning the *Education of Children*, I have carried the Argument through the ſtate of *Childhood* to the beginning of the next ſtep of their Age which we call *Youth*; when they come to exerciſe their Reaſon, and to be fit to take upon themſelves the performance of that *Solemn Vow* which was made for them by their *Sureties* in *Baptiſm*.

To encourage them to ſet ſeriouſly and in good earneſt about this Work, I ſhall now add another *Diſcourſe* concerning the *Advantages of an Early Piety*. And to this purpoſe I have choſen for the foundation of it theſe Words of *Solomon*, in his *Book* called *Eccleſiaſtes* or the *Preacher: Remember now the Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay I have no pleaſure in them.*

It will not be neceſſary to give an account of the *Context* any further than to tell you, that this *Book* of the *Royal Preacher* is a lively deſcription of the Vanity of the World in general, and particularly of the Life of Man. This is the main Body of his *Sermon*, in which there are here and there ſcattered many ſerious Reflections upon our ſelves, and very weighty Conſiderations to quicken our preparations for our latter End, and to put us in mind of *the days of darkneſs which will be many*, as the *Preacher* tells us in the *Chapter* before the *Text*.

Among theſe is the Admonition and advice in the words of the *Text*: Which do indeed concern thoſe that are *young*, but yet will afford uſeful matter of Meditation to perſons of all Ages and Conditions whatſoever: Of great thankfulneſs to Almighty God from thoſe who by the Grace of God, and his Bleſſing upon a pious Education, have entred upon a Religious courſe betimes: And of a deep Sorrow and Repentance to thoſe who have neglected and let ſlip this beſt Opportunity of their Lives; and of taking up a firm Reſolution of redeeming that loſs, as much as is poſſible, by their future care and diligence: And to them more eſpecially, who are grown old and have not yet begun this great and neceſſary Work, it will miniſter occaſion to reſolve upon a ſpeedy retreat, and without any further delay to return to God and their Duty; leſt the Opportunity of doing it, which is now almoſt quite ſpent, be loſt for ever.

The *Text* contains a *Duty*, which is to *remember our Creator*; and a *Limitation* of it, more eſpecially to one particular *Age* and *Time* of our Life; *in the days of our Youth:* Not to exclude any other Age, but to lay a particular *Emphaſis* and weight upon *this: Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth*, that is, more eſpecially in this Age of thy Life: To intimate to us, both that this is the fitteſt Seaſon, and that we cannot begin this Work too ſoon.

And this is further illuſtrated by the oppoſition of it to *Old Age: When the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, of which thou ſhalt ſay I have no pleaſure in them:* This is a Deſcription of *Old Age*, the evils whereof are continually growing; and which in reſpect of the cares and griefs, the diſtempers and infirmities which uſually attend it, is rather a burthen than a pleaſure.

In the handling of theſe *Words*, I ſhall do theſe *three* things:

Firſt, I ſhall conſider the nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoin'd, and that is to *remember God*.

Secondly, I ſhall conſider what there is in the Notion of God as *Creator* which is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige us to the remembrance of Him.

Thirdly, I ſhall conſider the *Limitation* of this Duty more eſpecially to this particular Age of our Lives, *the days of our Youth:* Why we ſhould begin this Work then, and not put it off to the Time of Old Age.

I. I ſhall conſider the nature of the *Act* or *Duty* here enjoin'd, which is to *remember our Creator*. For the underſtanding of which *Expreſſion* and others of the like nature in *Scripture*, it is to be conſider'd that it is very uſual in *Scripture* to expreſs *Religion* and the *whole Duty* of Man by ſome eminent *Act*, or *Principle*, or *Part* of *Religion:* Sometimes by the *Knowledge* of God, and by *Faith* in Him; and very frequently by the *Fear* and by the *Love* of God; becauſe theſe are the great *Principles* and *Parts* of *Religion:* And ſo likewiſe, though not ſo frequently, *Religion* is expreſs'd by the *Remembrance* of God: Now *Remembrance* is the actual thought of what we do habitually know. To remember God is to have him actually in our minds, and upon all proper occaſions to revive the thoughts of Him, and as *David* expreſſeth it, to *ſet him always before us: I ſet the Lord*, ſays he, *always before me*, that is, God was continually preſent to his mind and thoughts.

And in oppoſition to this we find wicked men in *Scripture* deſcribed by the contrary quality, *forgetfulneſs* of God: So they are deſcribed in *Job*;
Job 8. 13. *Such are the paths of them that forget God*, that is, of the wicked: And the
Pſal. 9. 17. ſame deſcription *David* gives of them. *The wicked*, ſays he, *ſhall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God:* And elſewhere he gives the
Pſal. 10. 4. ſame character of a wicked man, that *God is not in all his thoughts*.

And the courſe of a Religious Life is not unfitly expreſs'd by our *Remembrance of God*. For to *remember* a Perſon or Thing is to call them to mind upon all proper and fitting Occaſions; to think actually of them, ſo as to do that which the remembrance of them does require, or prompt us to. To remember a Friend, is to be ready upon occaſion to do him all good offices: To remember a kindneſs and benefit, is to be ready to acknowledge and requite it when there is an opportunity: To remember an injury, is to be ready to revenge it: And in a word to remember any thing is to be mindful to do that which the memory of ſuch a thing doth naturally ſuggeſt to us.

So that to *remember God*, is frequently and in our moſt ſerious and retired thoughts to conſider that there is ſuch a *Being* as *God* is; of all *Power* and *Perfection*, who made us and all other things, and hath given us Laws to live by, ſuitable to our Natures; and will call us to a ſtrict account for our obſervance or violation of them, and accordingly reward and puniſh us; very often in this World, and to be ſure in the other.

It is to revive often in our minds the thoughts of God and of his infinite Perfections, and to live continually under the power and awe of theſe apprehenſions, that He is infinitely wiſe and good, holy and juſt; that He is always preſent with us, and obſerves what we do, and is intimate to our moſt ſecret thoughts, and *will bring every work into Judgment, and every ſecret thing whether it be good, or whether be it evil*; as the *Preacher* tells us in the concluſion of this *Sermon*.

The Duty then here required of us, is ſo ſoon as we arrive at the uſe of Reaſon and the exerciſe of our Underſtandings, to take God into conſideration, and to begin a Religious Courſe of Life betimes; to conſecrate the beginning of our Days and the flower and ſtrength of them to his Service: Whilſt our Mind is yet ſoft and tender, and in a great meaſure free from all other impreſſions, to be mindful of the *Being* that is above us; and in all our deſigns and actions to take God into conſideration, and to do every thing in his Fear, and with an eye to his Glory. *Remember thy Creator*, that is, honour, fear, love, obey and ſerve Him; and in a word, do every thing as becomes one that is mindful of God, and hath Him continually in his thoughts.

II. I ſhall in the next place conſider, what there is in the Notion of God as our *Creator* that is more particularly apt to awaken and oblige men to the remembrance of God. The *Text* does not barely require us to *remember* God, but to remember Him as the Author and Founder of our Beings: *Remember thy Creator*. And there is certainly ſome particular *Emphaſis* in it, ſo that God conſidered under the Notion of our *Creator* is apt to ſtrike us with a particular regard and awe of Him. And that upon a *threefold* account; as *Creation* is a ſenſible demonſtration to us. *1ſt.* Of the *Being*. *2dly.* Of the *Power*, and *3dly.* Of the *Goodneſs* of God.

Firſt, Of His *Being*. The *Creation* is of all other the moſt ſenſible and obvious Argument of a Deity. Other conſiderations may work upon our Reaſon and Underſtanding, but this doth as it were bring God down to our ſenſes. So often as we look up to Heaven, or down upon the Earth; upon our Selves, or into our ſelves; upon the things without us, and round about us: Which way ſoever we turn our eyes, we are encounter'd with plain evidences of a *Superior Being*, which made us and all other things: Every thing which we behold with our eyes doth in ſome way or other repreſent God to us and bring him to our minds, ſo as we cannot avoid the ſight of Him if we would. So the *Pſalmiſt* tells us; *The Heavens declare the glory of God, and the Firmament ſhews the work of his hands.* And ſo likewiſe St. *Paul*: *The inviſible things of Him, from the Creation of the World, are clearly ſeen being underſtood by the things which are made; even his eternal Power and Godhead.* Pſal. 19. 1. Rom. 1.20.

Secondly, As the *Creation* is a demonſtration of God's infinite *Power*. And this Conſideration is apt to work upon our *Fear*, the moſt wakeful Paſſion of all other in the Soul of Man: Inſomuch that the *Atheiſt* would fain aſcribe the Original apprehenſion and belief of a Deity to the natural Fears of Men; *Primus in orbe Deos fecit timor, Fear firſt made Gods*; and by this means would fain perſuade us, that it is ſo far from being true that God is our *Creator*, that He is merely the *Creature* of our own vain *Fear* and *Imagination.*

But ſurely this is very unreaſonable. For if there be a God that made us, there is infinite reaſon why we ſhould ſtand in awe of Him, and have him always in our mind and thoughts; becauſe He who made us and all other things, if we neglect Him and forget ſo great a Benefactor, can as eaſily make us miſerable, or turn us out of Being. Therefore *Remember thy Creator*, and deſpiſe or forget Him at thy utmoſt peril.

Thirdly, As the *Creation* is a demonſtration of the *Goodneſs* of God to his Creatures. This Conſideration of God as our *Creator* doth naturally ſuggeſt to our minds, that his Goodneſs brought us into Being; and that if Being be a Benefit, God is the Fountain and Author of it, that his Goodneſs called us out of nothing, and made us to be what we are; for *of his good pleaſure we are and were created.* He was under no neceſſity of doing it; for He was from eternal Ages happy in himſelf before we were, and would have been ſo to all eternity though we had never been; nor was it poſſible He could be under any obligation to us before we were.

And He is not only our *Creator* as He gave us our Beings at firſt, but likewiſe as we are preſerved and continued in Life by the ſame Goodneſs which firſt gave us Life and Breath; for *of his Goodneſs we ARE* as well as *were created.*

And can we forget ſo great a Benefactor, and be *unmindful of the God that formed us?* Can we chuſe but remember the Founder of our Beings, the great Patron and Preſerver of our Lives? And ſo ſoon as we arrive at the uſe of Reaſon, and diſcover this great Benefactor to whom we owe our Lives and all the Bleſſings of them, can we forbear to do homage to him, and to ſay with *David, O come, let us worſhip and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker: For He is the Lord our God, it is He that hath made us and not we our ſelves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his paſture.* I proceed to conſider in the

III. and Laſt place, The Reaſon of the *Limitation* of this Duty more eſpecially to this particular *Age* of our Lives, *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth, when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay I have no pleaſure in them: NOW; in the days of thy Youth*; by which *Solomon* plainly deſigns *two* things:

Firſt, To engage young perſons to begin this great and neceſſary Work of Religion betimes, and aſſoon as ever they are capable of taking it into conſideration, *Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth.* And the Son of *Sirach* much to the ſame purpoſe, ſpeaking of one that in good earneſt applies his heart to Wiſdom, deſcribes him in this manner, *He will give his heart to reſort early to the Lord that made him*; which is the ſame with the expreſſion in the *Text*, of *remembring our Creator in the days of our Youth.* Eccluſ.

Secondly, To engage young perſons to ſet about this Work *preſently*, and not to defer it and put it off to the future, as moſt are apt to do; *Remember NOW thy Creator in the days of thy youth:* Eſpecially, not to adjourn it to the moſt unfit and improper time of all other, to the time of infirmity and old Age, *NOW, in the days of thy Youth; when the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them: While the Sun, or the Light, or the Moon, or the Stars be not darken'd,* &c.

And how much reaſon there is to preſs both theſe Conſiderations upon young perſons I ſhall endeavour to ſhew in the following Particulars.

Firſt, Becauſe in this Age of our Lives we have the greateſt and moſt ſenſible obligation to ***remember*** God ***our Creator: In the days of our youth***, when the Bleſſing and Benefit of Life is new, and the memory of it freſh upon our minds. It ought not indeed to be ſo, but we find it true which *Seneca* ſays, ***Nihil citius ſeneſcit quàm gratia, Nothing ſooner grows old and out of date than obligation***; and we are but too apt to forget what we have the greateſt reaſon to remember.

In this Age of our Life, when we begin to come to the free uſe and exerciſe of our Reaſon, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in, and if we were not taught it we ſhould, though perhaps more ſlowly, diſcover and find it out of our ſelves: I ſay, the firſt thing we are inſtructed in and inquiſitive about is the *Author* of our Beings, and how we came into the World: And when God firſt appears to our Minds, and we come by degrees clearly to underſtand by whoſe Bounty and Bleſſing it is that we are and have been preſerved thus long, without our own care; principally by the Providence of God, and under Him by thoſe inſtruments which he hath raiſed and preſerved for that purpoſe: When we conſider this, we cannot but be ſtrangely ſurpriz'd both with the Novelty of the Benefit and the Greatneſs of it.

And when we have well viewed our Selves, and look'd about us, upon the Creatures below us, all of them ſubject to our Dominion and uſe: And when we conſider ſeriouſly in what a noble Rank and Order of Creatures we are placed; and how fearfully and wonderfully we are made, not groveling upon the Earth or bowed down to it, but of a beautiful and upright ſhape of Body, and ſuch a Majeſty of Countenance as if we were all Kings of the Creation: And which is much more excellent than this, that we are endued with Minds and Underſtandings, with Reaſon and Speech, whereby we are capable not only of converſing with and benefiting one another, but alſo of the knowledge and friendſhip and enjoyment of the Beſt and moſt Perfect of Beings, God himſelf: I ſay, when we firſt conſider this and meditate ſeriouſly upon it, can we poſſibly ever after forget God? Shall we not naturally break out into that enquiry which ***Elihu*** thinks ſo proper for Man that he wonders it is not in every Man's mouth, ***Where is God my Maker, who teacheth me more than the Beaſts of the Earth, and maketh me wiſer than the Fowls of Heaven?*** Job 35.10, 11.

So that there is a very ſpecial obligation upon us to be mindful of God in this Age of our Lives, when we firſt come to the knowledge of Him, and when the ſenſe of his Favours is freſh and new to us; and not only ſo, but when the Bleſſing of Life is at the very beſt and in its verdure and flower; when our Health is in its ſtrength and vigor, and the pleaſures and enjoyments of Life have their full taſte and perfect reliſh. So ***Job*** deſcribes the days of his youth, ***O that I were as in months paſt, as in the days when God preſerved me; when his Candle ſhined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkneſs, as I was in the days of my youth***, &c. Job 29. 2, 3, 4.

Indeed when the ***evil days*** are once ***come***, and thou art enter'd upon ***the years*** in which thou thy ſelf ***haſt no pleaſure***, there might be ſome ſort of pretence ***then*** to forget God; becauſe ***then*** Life begins to wither and decay, and not only the gloſs and beauty but even the comfort and ſweetneſs of it is gone, and it becomes an inſipid and taſtleſs thing: ***But thou art inexcuſable, O Man, whoever thou art***, if thou art unmindful of God in the beſt Age of thy Life, and when the ſenſe of his Benefits ought upon all accounts to make the ſtrongeſt and deepeſt impreſſions upon thy Mind.

Secondly, The Reaſon will be yet ſtronger to put us upon this, if we conſider that notwithſtanding the great obligation which lies upon us to *remember our Creator in the days of our youth*, we are moſt apt at that time of all other to forget Him. For that which is the great Bleſſing of Youth is alſo the great Danger of it, I mean, the Health and Proſperity of it; and though Men have *then* leaſt reaſon, yet are they moſt apt to forget God in the height of pleaſure and in the abundance of all things.

Youth is extreamly addicted to pleaſure, becauſe it is moſt capable and moſt ſenſible of it; and where we are moſt apt to be tranſported, there we are moſt apt to tranſgreſs. Nothing does ſo beſot the Mind and extinguiſh in it all ſenſe of Divine things as ſenſual Pleaſures. If we fall in love with them, they will take off our thoughts from Religion and ſteal away our hearts from God. For *no man can ſerve two Maſters*; and *the carnal mind is enmity againſt God.*

Beſides that Youth is raſh and inconſiderate, becauſe unexperienc'd; and conſequently not apt to to be cautious and prudent, no not as to the future concernments of this temporal Life; much leſs of that which ſeems to be at ſo much a greater diſtance, and for that reaſon is ſo very ſeldom in our thoughts.

Thirdly, Becauſe this Age is of all other the fitteſt and beſt to begin a Religious courſe of Life. And this does not contradict the former Argument, though it ſeems to do ſo. For as it is true of Children, that they are moſt prone to be idle, and yet fitteſt to learn; ſo in the caſe we are ſpeaking of both are true, that youth is an Age wherein we are too apt, if left to our ſelves, to forget God and Religion, and yet at the ſame time fitteſt to receive the impreſſions of it.

Youth is *ætatis Diſciplinæ*, the proper *Age of Diſcipline*; very obſequious and tractable, fit to receive any kind of impreſſion and to imbibe any tincture: Now we ſhould lay hold of this golden Opportunity. This Age of ſuppleneſs, and obedience, and patience for labour, ſhould be plyed by Parents, before that rigor and ſtiffneſs which grows with years come on too faſt. Childhood and Youth are choice Seaſons for the planting of Religion and Virtue, and if Parents and Teachers ſleep in this Seed-time they are ill Husbandmen; for this is *the time of plowing and ſowing*.

Iſa. 28. 9.

This Age is moſt certainly the moſt proper for Inſtruction, according to that of the *Prophet*, *Whom ſhall he teach knowledge? Whom ſhall he make to underſtand Doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breaſt. For precept muſt be upon precept and line upon line, here a little and there a little.* And the ſooner this is done, the better; only things muſt be inſtilled into them gently and by degrees.

It is a noted Saying of *Ariſtotle*, *That young Perſons are not fit to hear Lectures of Moral Philoſophy*; becauſe at that Age Paſſion is ſo predominant and unruly: By which, I think, he only means that the Minds of young Perſons are leaſt prepared to receive the Precepts of Morality and to ſubmit to them; but that he does not hereby intend, that therefore no care ought to be uſed to form the Minds and Manners of Youth to Virtue and Goodneſs. He certainly underſtood the nature and power of evil Habits too well to be of that mind; and conſequently muſt think that the Principles of Morality ought with great care and diligence to be inſtill'd into young perſons betimes: Becauſe they of all other have the moſt need of this kind of Inſtruction, and this Age is the moſt proper Seaſon for it: And the leſs their Minds are prepared for it, ſo much the more pains ought to be taken with them, that they may be taught to govern and ſubdue their Paſſions before they grow too ſtiff and headſtrong. So that if the Seeds of Religion and Virtue be not planted in our younger years, what is to be expected in old Age? according to that of the Son of *Sirach*, *If thou haſt gathered nothing in thy Youth, how canſt thou expect to find any thing in thine Age?* Eccluſ. 25. 13.

Young years are tender and eaſily wrought upon, apt to be moulded into any faſhion, they are *udum & molle lutum*, like *moiſt and ſoft clay* which is pliable to any form; but ſoon grows hard, and then nothing is to be made of it. It is a very difficult thing to make impreſſions upon Age, and to deface the Evil which hath been deeply imprinted upon young and tender minds. When good Inſtruction hath been neglected at firſt, a conceited Ignorance doth commonly take poſſeſſion, and obſtruct all the paſſages through which Knowledge and Wiſdom ſhould enter into us.

Upon this Conſideration the Work of Religion ſhould be begun betimes, becauſe it is a mighty advantage to any thing to be planted in a ground that is newly broken up. It is juſt the ſame thing to young perſons to be enter'd into a Religious courſe and to have their Minds habituated to Virtue before vicious Cuſtoms have got place and ſtrength in us: For whoever ſhall attempt this afterwards will meet with infinite difficulty and oppoſition, and muſt diſpute his ground by inches.

It is good therefore to do that which muſt be done one time or other, when it is eaſieſt to be done; when we may do it with the greateſt advantage, and are likely to meet with the leaſt and weakeſt oppoſition. We ſhould anticipate Vice, and prevent the Devil and the World by letting God into our hearts betimes and giving Religion the firſt *ſeiſine* and poſſeſſion of our Souls. This is the time of ſowing our Seed, which muſt by no means be neglected. For the Soul will not lye fallow; good or evil will come up. If our Minds be not cultivated by Religion, Sin and Vice will get the poſſeſſion of them: but if our tender years be ſeaſoned with the knowledge and fear of God, this in all probability will have a good influence upon the following courſe of our Lives.

In a word, this Age of our Lives is proper for Labour and Conflict; becauſe Youth is full of heat, and vigor, of courage, and reſolution to enterprize and effect difficult things. This heat indeed renders young perſons very unfit to adviſe and direct themſelves, and therefore they have need to be adviſed and directed by thoſe who are wiſe and more experienced: But yet this heat makes them very fit for practice and action; for though they are bad at counſel, they are admirable at execution, when their heat is well directed; they have a great deal of vivacity and quickneſs, of courage and conſtancy in the way wherein they are ſet.

Beſides, that Youth hath a great ſenſe of Honour and Virtue, of Praiſe and Commendation, which are of great force to engage young perſons to attempt worthy and excellent things: For hope and confidence, ſtrength and courage, with which ſenſe of Honour and deſire of Praiſe are apt to inſpire them, are admirable inſtruments of Victory and Maſtery in any kind; and theſe are proper and moſt peculiar to Youth, *I write unto you young men,* ſaith St. *John*, *becauſe ye are ſtrong, and have overcome the evil One.*

And, beſides the ſpirit and vigor of Youth, young perſons have ſeveral other qualities which make them very capable of learning any thing that is good. They are apt to believe, becauſe they have not been often deceived; and this is a very good quality in a Learner. And they are full of hopes, which will encourage them to attempt things even beyond their ſtrength; becauſe Hope is always of the future, and the Life of young perſons is in a great meaſure before them and yet to come. And, which is a good Bridle to reſtrain them from that which is evil, they are commonly very modeſt and baſhful: And, which is alſo a ſingular advantage, they are more apt to do that which is honeſt and commendable than that which is gainful and profitable, being in a great meaſure free from the *love of Money*, which *Experience*, as well as the *Apoſtle*, tells us, *is the root of all evil.* Children are very ſeldom covetous, becauſe they have ſeldom been bitten by want.

Fourthly, This is the moſt acceptable Time of all other, becauſe it is the firſt of our Age. Under the *Law* the *firſt-fruits* and the *firſt-born* were God's. In like manner we ſhould devote the *firſt* of our *Age* and *Time* to *Him.* God is the firſt and moſt excellent of Beings; and therefore it is fit that the prime of our Age and the excellency of our Strength ſhould be dedicated to Him and his Service.

An early Piety muſt needs be very acceptable and pleaſing to God. Our *Bleſſed Lord* took great pleaſure to ſee *little Children come unto Him*; an *Emblem* of the pleaſure he takes that Men ſhould liſt themſelves betimes in his ſervice. St. *John* was the youngeſt of all the *Diſciples*, and our *Saviour* had a very particular kindneſs and affection for him; for he is ſaid to be *the Diſciple whom Jeſus loved.*

It is a good ſign that we value God as we ought, and have a true eſteem for his ſervice, when we can find in our hearts to give him our *good Days*, and *the years* which we our ſelves *have pleaſure in*? And that we have a grateful ſenſe of his benefits and of our mighty obligation to him, when we make the quickeſt and beſt returns we can, and think nothing too good to render to *Him* from whom we have received all.

It is likewiſe an argument of great Sincerity, which is the Soul of all Religion and Virtue, when a Man devotes himſelf to God betimes: becauſe it is a good evidence that he is not drawn by thoſe forcible conſtraints, nor driven to God by that preſſing neceſſity which lies upon Men in time of *Sickneſs* and *old Age.* And on the contrary, it cannot but be very diſpleaſing to God to be neglected by us when we are in the flower and vigor of our Age: When our Blood is warm, and our Spirits quick, and our Parts are at the beſt, *then* to think our ſelves too good to ſerve God; what an affront is this to Him who hath deſerved ſo infinitely well of us, and beyond the beſt and utmoſt that we can poſſibly do?

Beſides, that there is a peculiar kind of grace and lovelineſs in the worthy and excellent actions of Young Perſons, great things being hardly expected from them at that Age. Early Habits of Virtue, like new Cloathes upon a young and comely Body, ſit very gracefully upon a ſtraight and well-ſhap'd Mind, and do mightily become it.

As there is Joy in Heaven at the converſion of a great and old Sinner, ſo it cannot but be a very delightful Spectacle to God and Angels, and to the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, to ſee a Young Perſon beſieged by powerful Temptations on every ſide, to acquit himſelf glorioſly, and reſolutely to hold out againſt the moſt violent Aſſaults: To behold one, in the pride and flower of his Age, that is courted by Pleaſures and Honours, by the Devil and all the bewitching Vanities of this World, to reject all theſe and to cleave ſtedfaſtly to God: Nay, to frown upon all theſe Temptations and to look down upon them with indignation and ſcorn, and to ſay, Let thoſe dote upon theſe things, who know no better: Let them adore ſenſual Pleaſures and lying Vanities, who are ignorant of the ſincere and ſolid Pleaſures of Religion and Virtue: Let them run into the arms of Temptation who can forget God their *Creator*, their *Preſerver*, and *the Guide of their Youth*: As for me, I will ſerve the Lord, and will employ my whole time either innocently or uſefully, in ſerving God, and in doing good to Men who are made after the Image of God. This work ſhall take up my whole Life, there ſhall be no void or empty Space in it; I will endeavour, as much as poſſibly I can, that there may be no gap or breach in it for the Devil and his Temptations to enter in: Lord, I will be thine, I have choſen thee for my happineſs and *my portion for ever: Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee. Lo! they that are far from thee ſhall periſh: But it is good for me to draw near to God*, to begin and end my Days in his fear and to his glory.

Fifthly and Laſtly, This Age of our Life may, for any thing we know, be the only Time we may have for this purpoſe; and if we caſt off the thoughts of God and defer the buſineſs of Religion to old Age, intending, as we pretend, to ſet about it at that Time, we may be cut off before that Time comes, and *turned into Hell with the People that forget God.*

The Work of Religion is the moſt neceſſary of all other, and muſt be done one time or other, or we are certainly undone for ever. We cannot begin it too ſoon, but we eaſily delay it too long; and then we are miſerable paſt all recovery. He that would not venture his immortal Soul, and put his everlaſting Happineſs upon the greateſt hazard and uncertainty, muſt make Religion his firſt buſineſs and care, muſt think of God betimes and *remember his Creator in the days of his Youth.*

I have now done with the *three* things which I propoſed to conſider from theſe Words. The *Inferences* from this whole *Diſcourſe* ſhall be theſe *two*:

Firſt, To perſuade thoſe that are young to *remember* God *their Creator*, and to engage in the ways of Religion and Virtue betimes.

Secondly, To urge thoſe who have neglected this firſt and beſt Opportunity of their Lives, to repent quickly and return to a better mind; leſt the Opportunity be loſt for ever, and their caſe become deſperate and paſt remedy.

Firſt, To perſuade thoſe that are young to *remember* God *their Creator* betimes, and to engage early in the ways of Religion and Virtue. Do not ſuffer your ſeves to be cheated and bewitched by ſenſual ſatisfactions, and to be deſtroyed by eaſe and proſperity. Let not a perpetual tenor of Health and Pleaſure ſoften and diſſolve your Spirits, and baniſh all wiſe and ſerious thoughts out of your Minds. Be not ſo fooliſh and unworthy, as to think that you have a privilege to forget God when he is moſt mindful of you; *when the Candle of the Lord ſhines about your Tabernacle*, and you are enjoying the health, and ſtrength, and ſweetneſs of Life.

No Man knows what he does, and what an invaluable Treaſure he prodigally waſtes, when he lets ſlip this golden Seaſon and Opportunity of his Life; whilſt he is yet innocent and untainted with Sin and Vice, and his Mind is clear of all bad impreſſions, and capable of the beſt; not enſlaved to evil, and at liberty to do well.

Conſider, that the ways of Religion and Virtue are nothing ſo difficult and unpleaſant now, as they will be hereafter: And that the longer you forget God, and the more you are eſtranged from Him, the more unwilling you will be to think of him and to return to him: That your Luſts will every day gain more ſtrength, and your hearts by degrees will contract ſuch a ſtiffneſs and hardneſs that it will be no eaſie matter to work upon them.

Therefore *remember your Creator in the days of your youth*: *To day, whilſt it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.* When will you think of beginning a good courſe, if not now? You have a great Work before you which cannot be done in a little time, which cannot be begun and finiſh'd at once. Your whole Life is no more than ſufficient for it; to do it to the beſt advantage, and as it ought to be done. Do not then think of crowding it into a corner of your Life, much leſs of putting it off to the very end of it: When *that night comes, no man can work.*

Conſider further; If we will deny God the hearty and vigorous ſervice of our beſt days, how can we expect that he will accept the faint and flattering Devotions of old Age? Wiſe Men are wont to forecaſt and provide ſome ſtay and comfort for themſelves againſt the evils and infirmities of that Time; that they may have ſomething to lean upon in their weakneſs, ſomething to mitigate and allay the troubles and afflictions of that dark and gloomy Evening: That what they cannot enjoy of preſent pleaſure and ſatisfaction may in ſome meaſure be made up to them in comfortable reflections upon the paſt actions of a holy and innocent, an uſeful and well-ſpent Life.

But on the other hand, if we have neglected Religion, and forgotten God days without number; if we have lived an ungodly and vicious Life, we have treaſured up ſo much guilt and remorſe, ſo many aggravations of our ſorrow and anguiſh againſt an evil Day; and have fooliſhly contrived to make our burthen then heavieſt, when we are leaſt able to ſtand under it; and have provided and laid in infinite matter for Repentance, when there is hardly any ſpace and opportunity left for the exerciſe of it; and when we ſhall be utterly diſhearten'd from ſetting about ſo vaſt a Work, of which we can ſee no end; and yet have ſo very little time for it, that if we do any thing at all in it we ſhall be forc'd to huddle it up in ſo much haſte and confuſion, as will, I doubt, ſignifie but very little either to our preſent comfort, or our future happineſs.

Conſider this in time, all ye that forget God in the Day of your proſperity and in the beſt Age of your Life, and yet when the Day of affliction and the infirmities of Age come upon you would be glad then to have God mindful of you, and merciful to you. But if thou wouldſt not have Him *caſt thee off in thine old Age, and forſake thee when thy ſtrength fails*, do thou *remember Him in the days of thy youth*, in the prime and vigor of thine Age: For *this is the acceptable Time, this is the day of Salvation.*

Therefore acquaint thy ſelf with Him, and *remember him NOW; in the days of thy Youth*; and defer not ſo neceſſary a work, no not for one moment: Begin it juſt *now*, that ſo thou mayeſt have made ſome good progreſs in it before *the evil days come*; before *the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars be darkened*, and all the comforts and joys of Life be fled and gone.

Be not deceived, O Man, whoſoever thou art; for *God is not mocked.* He will not be put off by us *with the Days in which we our ſelves have no pleaſure.* Offer up thy ſelf *a living Sacrifice* and not a *Carkaſs*, if thou wouldeſt be accepted. Do not provoke and affront the Living God by offering up to him faint ſpirits, and feeble hands, and dim eyes, and a dead heart. He hath been bountiful to us in giving us the beſt Bleſſings of Life, and all things richly to enjoy; and do we grudge Him the moſt valuable part of our Lives, and *the years which we* our ſelves *have pleaſure in? Do we thus requite the Lord? fooliſh people and unwiſe!* Is the Giver of all good things unworthy to receive from us any thing that is good? *If we offer up the lame in Sacrifice, is it not evil? and if we offer up the blind, is it not evil? Offer* *it now to thy Governour, and try if he will be pleaſed with thee and accept thy perſon.* Hath God deſerved ſo ill at our hands, that we ſhould forget and neglect Him? And hath the Devil deſerved ſo well of us, that we ſhould be contented to ſpend the beſt part of our Lives in his Service, which is perfect Slavery? Was he our Creator, or can he make us happy? Nay, does he not carry on a moſt malicious deſign to make us for ever miſerable?

Secondly, Let me urge thoſe who have neglected this firſt and beſt Opportunity of their Lives to repent quickly and return to a better mind, leſt all Opportunity of doing it be loſt for ever, and their caſe become deſperate and paſt remedy. Reſolve to redeem, if it be poſſible, the Time which you ſhould have improved: you have ſquander'd away too much already, waſte no more of this precious Opportunity of Life: you have deferr'd a neceſſary Work too long, delay it no longer. Do not delude your ſelves with vain hopes that this Work may be done at any time, and in an inſtant; that if you can but faſhion your laſt breath into *Lord have mercy upon me*, this will prevail with God and make atonement for the long courſe of a wicked and ſinful Life. What ſtrange thoughts have Men of God and Heaven, what extravagant conceits of the little evil of Sin and the great eaſineſs of Repentance, that can impoſe upon themſelves at this rate?

Bethink your ſelves better in time, *conſider and ſhew your ſelves men.* What will you do in the day of your diſtreſs, who have neglected God in your moſt flouriſhing and proſperous condition? What will you ſay to Him in a dying hour, who ſcarce ever had one ſerious thought of him all your Life? Can you have the face at that time to beſpeak him in this manner? Lord, now the World and my Luſts have left me, and I feel my ſelf ready to ſink into eternal perdition, I lay hold upon thy Mercy to deliver my Soul from going down into the Pit. I have heard ſtrange things of thy Goodneſs and that thou art merciful even to a miracle. This is that which I always truſted to, that after a long Life of Sin and Vanity thou wouldſt at laſt be pacified with a few penitent words and ſighs at the hour of Death. Let me not, I pray thee, be diſappointed of this hope and put to confuſion.

Is this an addreſs fit to be made to a wiſe man, much leſs to the all-wiſe and juſt Judge of the World? and yet this ſeems to be the plain Interpretation of the late and forced application of a great and habitual Sinner to Almighty God in his laſt extremity, and when he is juſt giving up the ghoſt and going to appear before his dreadful Tribunal.

I ſay again, let no Man deceive you with vain words, or with vain hopes, or with falſe notions of a ſlight and ſudden repentance: As if Heaven were an Hoſpital founded on purpoſe to receive all ſick and maimed perſons, that when they can live no longer to the Luſts of the ſinful Pleaſures of this World can but put up a cold and formal Petition to be admitted there.

No, no, as ſure as God is true, they ſhall never ſee the Kingdom of God, who inſtead of ſeeking it in the firſt place make it their laſt Refuge and Retreat: And when they find themſelves under the Sentence of Death and Damnation, only to avoid preſent Execution, and ſince there is no other remedy, do at laſt bethink themſelves of getting to *Heaven*, and fall upon their Knees to petition the *Great Judge of the World* that they may be *tranſported* thither.

Can any Man in reaſon expect that ſuch a Petition will be granted? I tell you Nay; but except you repent ſooner, and at a fitter time, and after a better faſhion, you ſhall certainly periſh. As much as God deſires the Salvation of Men, he will not proſtitute Heaven, and ſet the Gates of it wide open to thoſe who only fly to it in extremity, but never ſought it in good earneſt, nor indeed do not care for it or deſire it for any other reaſon, but to excuſe them from going to Hell. They have no value for Heaven, becauſe they are in no wiſe fit for it, but yet they think Hell to be the worſe Place of the two.

The ever Bleſſed God is Himſelf abundantly ſufficient for his own Happineſs, and does not need our company to make any addition to it: Nor yet is Heaven ſo deſolate a Place, or ſo utterly void of Inhabitants, that like ſome newly diſcovered *Plantation* it ſhould be glad to receive the moſt vile and profligate perſons, the ſcum and refuſe of Mankind. There are an innumerable Company of glorious Angels, much nobler Creatures than the beſt of Men, to people thoſe bleſſed Regions. *Thouſands of thouſands* continually *ſtand before God, and ten thouſand times ten thouſands miniſter unto Him.*

We do abſolutely ſtand in need of God to make us happy, but He hath no need of us to help Him to be ſo. God indeed is ſo good, as to deſire our Happineſs as earneſtly as if it were neceſſary to his own: But he is happy in and from Himſelf, and without Him it is impoſſible we ſhould be happy, nay, we muſt of neceſſity be for ever miſerable.

To conclude; if we would have God to accept us in a dying hour, and our *B. Saviour to remember us* now *he is in his Kingdom,* let us think of him betimes, and *acquaint our ſelves with him that we may be at peace: NOW;* before *the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when we ſhall ſay, we have no pleaſure in them.*

O that men were wiſe, that they underſtood this, and that they would conſider their latter end. Which God of his infinite Goodneſs grant that we may all ſeriouſly lay to heart, *in this our Day*; and may *learn* betimes *ſo to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wiſdom*: For his mercies ſake in *Jeſus Chriſt*, to whom with the *Father* and the *H. Ghoſt*, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

THE RULE OF FAITH.

OR AN

ANSWER

TO THE

TREATISE of Mr. *I. S.*

ENTITLED

SURE-FOOTING, &c.

By His Grace *JOHN*, Late Lord Arch-Biſhop
Of *CANTERBURY*.

The Fourth Edition.

LONDON,
Printed by *J. R.* for *Brabazon Aylmer*, at the *Three Pidgeons*, againſt the *Royal Exchange* in *Cornhill*, and *William Rogers* at the *Sun* againſt St. *Dunſtans* Church in *Fleetſtreet*, 1695.

TO MY

Honoured and Learned Friend,

Dr. Stillingfleet.

SIR,

I *Have with a great deal of pleaſure and ſatisfaction read over your* Book, *which I find in every part anſwerable to its* Title, *viz.* A Rational Account of the Grounds of the Proteſtant Religion. *And now I thank you for it, not onely as a private favour, but a publick benefit. No ſooner had I peruſed it, but I met with a* Diſcourſe *entituled,* Sure-footing in Chriſtianity. *And although I have no ſmall prejudice againſt Books with conceited Titles, yet I was tempted to look into this, becauſe it pretended to contain* Animadverſions on ſome Paſſages *in your Book which I had ſo lately read over. Upon peruſal of which* Animadverſions, *I found that the* Authour *of them had attaqued (and in his own opinion confuted) a page or two in your Book This drew me on to take a view of his main* Diſcourſes; *which becauſe they are in great vogue among ſome of his own Party, and do with an unuſual kind of confidence and oſtentation pretend to the neweſt and moſt exact* faſhion *of writing* Controverſie, *as being all along* demonſtrative *and built upon* ſelf-evident Principles: *Therefore I reſolved throughly to examine them, that I might diſcover (if I could) upon what* *ſo firm and ſolid Foundations this* High *and* Mighty *Confidence was built.*

But before I had entred upon this undertaking, I met with a Letter *from the Authour of* Sure-footing *to his* Anſwerer, *directing him how he ought to demean himſelf in his Anſwer. In which* Letter, *though there be many things liable to great exception, yet becauſe I am unwilling to be diverted from the main* Queſtion, *I ſhall not argue with him about any of thoſe matters, onely take leave to uſe the ſame liberty in managing my Anſwer, which he hath aſſumed to himſelf, in preſcribing Laws to me about it: Therefore without taking any farther notice of his* Letter, *I addreſs my ſelf to his* Book.

THE

THE RULE OF FAITH.

PART. I.

The Explication and State of the Queſtion.

SECT. I.

The Explication of the Terms of the Queſtions.

§. 1. THE Queſtion he propounds to himſelf to debate, is, *What is the Rule of Faith?* In order to the Reſolution whereof, he endeavours,

Firſt, To fix the true notion of theſe two Terms, *Rule*, and *Faith*. Which way of proceeding I cannot but allow to be very proper and reaſonable; but I can by no means think his explication of thoſe Terms to be ſufficient. He tells us, That *a Rule is that which is able to regulate, or guide him that uſeth it:* In which deſcription, as in many other paſſages of his Book, he is plainly guilty of that which he taxeth in Mr. * *Whitby*, that is, the confounding of a *Rule* and a *Guide*, by making *Regulating* and *Guiding* to be equivalent words. But for this I am no farther concerned, than to take notice of it by the way: The fault which I find in this *definition* is, that it doth not make the thing plainer than it was before; ſo that no man is the wiſer for it, nor one jot nearer knowing what a *Rule* is. He pretends to tell *Engliſh-men* what a *Rule* is, and for their clearer underſtanding of this *word*, he explains it by a *word* leſs remov'd from the *Latin*, *A Rule is that which is able to regulate him that uſeth it*; juſt as if a man ſhould goe about to explain what a *Law-giver* is, by ſaying, *he is one that hath the power of Legiſlation.* Of the two, he had much better have ſaid, that a *Rule* is a thing that is able to rule him that uſeth it, though this be nothing but an explication of the ſame *word* by it ſelf.

* P. 180.

§. 2. Not much better is his explication of the term *Faith*, which he tells us *in the common ſenſe of Mankind, is the ſame with Believing.* * He declar'd indeed before-hand, that he did not *intend to give rigorous School-definitions of either this or the former word*; and (to do him right) he hath not in the leaſt ſwerv'd from his intention. It were to be wiſh'd he had prefac'd ſome ſuch thing to his *Demonſtrations*; for the Reader will find, that they are not one whit more *rigorous* then his *definitions*; the latter of

* P. 4.

which doth very much reſemble the Country-man's way of defining, who being ask'd by his neighbour what an *Invaſion* was, after ſome ſtudy, told him very gravely, that *an Invaſion* was *as if he ſhould ſay an Invaſion*; In like manner Mr. *S.* tells us that *Faith* (or which is all one, *Belief*) *is the ſame with believing*; which in my apprehenſion is but a Country-definition, unleſs the interpoſing of thoſe ſolemn words [*in the common ſenſe of mankind*] may be thought to mend the matter. This puts me in mind of what Mr. *S.* ſays in his * *Tranſition* (as he calls it) where he gives the Reader an account what feats he hath done in his Book: *He will ſee* (ſays he) *I take my Riſe at the meaning of the words* Rule *and* Faith; *this known, I eſtabliſh my Firſt Principles in this preſent matter, to be theſe,* viz. *A Rule is a Rule, Faith is Faith.* This is the right *ſelf-evident method* he talks ſo much of, and his *Principles agree* admirably well with his *definitions.* If he had but proceeded in the ſame method, and added, that *A Rule of Faith is a Rule of Faith*; that *Oral Tradition is Oral Tradition*; and that to ſay, *Oral Tradition is the Rule of Faith*, is as much as to ſay, *Oral Tradition is the Rule of Faith*, the whole buſineſs had been concluded without any more adoe; and I think no body would have gone about to confute him.

* P. 159.

§. 3. Rejecting then his way of Definition, as inept and frivolous, and no ways tending to give a man a clearer notion of things, I ſhall endeavour to explain a little better (if I can) the meaning of theſe Terms.

A *Rule* (when we ſpeak of a *Rule of Faith*) is a Metaphorical word, which in its firſt and proper ſenſe being applied to *material* and *ſenſible* things, is the *Meaſure* according to which we judge of the ſtreightneſs and crookedneſs of things. And from hence it is transferred by analogy to things *moral* or *intellectual*. *A moral Rule* is the *Meaſure* according to which we judge, whether a thing be *good* or *evil*; and this kind of Rule, is ſutably to the Metaphor called *rectitude*, or *obliquity*. An *intellectual Rule* is the *Meaſure* according to which we judge whether a thing be *true* or *falſe*; and this is either *general*, or more *particular*. Common notions and the acknowledged Principles of Reaſon, are that *general Rule*, according to which we judge whether a thing be *true* or *falſe*. The particular principles of every Science are the more particular Rules, according to which we judge whether things in that Science be *true* or *falſe*. So that the *general* notion of a *Rule* is, that it is *a meaſure, by the agreement or diſagreement to which we judge of all things of that kind to which it belongs.*

§. 4. *Faith*, though both among ſacred and prophane Writers, it be uſed many times more *generally*, for a perſwaſion or aſſent of the mind to any thing wrought in us by any kind of argument; yet, as it is a Term of Art uſed by *Divines*, it ſignifies that *particular* kind of aſſent which is wrought in us by *Teſtimony* or *Authority*. So that *Divine Faith* which we are now ſpeaking of, is an aſſent to a thing upon the teſtimony or authority of God, or, which is all one, an *aſſent to a truth upon Divine revelation.*

§. 5. *A Rule of Faith* is the *Meaſure*, according to which we judge what matter we are to aſſent to, as revealed to us by God, and what not. And more particularly, the *Rule of Chriſtian Faith* is the Meaſure, according to which we are to judge what we ought to aſſent to, as the Doctrine revealed by *Chriſt* to the world, and what not.

§. 6. So that this Queſtion, *What is the Rule of Chriſtian Faith?* ſuppoſeth a Doctrine revealed by Chriſt to the world; and that *that* Doctrine was intelligibly and intirely delivered by Chriſt to his Apoſtles, and ſufficient confirmation given to it, that this Doctrine was in the ſame manner publiſhed to the world by the Apoſtles, who likewiſe gave ſufficient evidence of the truth of it. All this is neceſſarily ſuppoſed in the Queſtion: For it would be in vain to enquire whether this or that be the Rule of Chriſtian Faith, if ſuch a thing as the Chriſtian Faith were not firſt ſuppoſed. When therefore we enquire what is the Rule of Chriſtian Faith? the meaning of that enquiry is, by what way and meanes the knowledge of Chriſt's Doctrine is conveyed certainly down to us, who live at the diſtance of ſo many Ages from the time of its firſt delivery; For this being known, we have the *Rule of Faith*; *that is*, a meaſure by which we may judge what we are to aſſent to, as the Doctrine of Chriſt, and what not. So that when any Queſtion ariſeth about any particular Propoſition, whether this be part of Chriſt's Doctrine, we may be able by this *Rule* to reſolve it.

SECT. II

Mr. S's Rule of Faith.

§. 1. THE next thing to be conſidered is his reſolution of this Queſtion; by which we ſhall know what his opinion is concerning the *Rule of Faith*; for that being known, the Controverſie between us will eaſily be ſtated.

His opinion in general is, that *oral* or *practical Tradition* (in oppoſition to *writing*; or any other way that can be aſſigned) *is the Rule of Faith*. By *oral or practical Tradition*, he means [*] *a delivery down from hand to hand (by words, and conſtant courſe of frequent and viſible actions, conformable to thoſe words) of the ſenſe and faith of Forefathers.*

[*] P. 41.

§. 2. Now that I may bring the Controverſie between us to a clear ſtate, I am firſt to take a more particular view of his Opinion concerning the *Rule of Faith*, that ſo I may the better underſtand how much he attributes to Oral Tradition, and what to the Scriptures, or written Tradition. And then I am to lay down the Proteſtant *Rule of Faith*, that ſo it may appear how far we agree, and how far we differ. The ſum of what he attributes to Oral Tradition, ſo far as can be collected out of ſo obſcure and confuſed a Diſcourſe, may be reduced to theſe five Heads.

§. 3. *Firſt*, That the Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion was delivered by Chriſt to the Apoſtles, and by them publiſhed to the World; and that the Age which firſt received it from the Apoſtles, delivered it as they received it, without any change or corruption to their Children, and they to theirs, and ſo it went on ſolely by this way of Oral Tradition. This is the ſum of his Explication of Tradition, *Diſc. 5th.*

§. 4. *Secondly*, That this way alone is not only ſufficient to convey this Doctrine down to all Ages certainly, and without any alteration; but it is the only poſſible way that can be imagined of conveying down a Doctrine ſecurely from one Age to another. And this is the natural reſult of his Diſcourſe about the *Properties* of a *Rule of Faith*: for if the true properties of a *Rule of Faith* do belong to Oral Tradition, then it is a ſufficient means; and if thoſe Properties do ſolely and eſſentially appertain to it and are incompatible to any thing elſe (as he endeavours to prove) then it is impoſſible there ſhould be any other way.

§. 5. *Thirdly*, That it is impoſſible this means ſhould fail, or miſs of its end; that is, the Doctrine of Chriſt being once put into this way of conveyance, it can neither ceaſe to deſcend, nor be at any time corrupted or changed in its deſcent. This is that which his *Demonſtrations* pretend to prove.

§. 6. *Fourthly*, That the infallibility of Oral Tradition, or the impoſſibility of its ſailing, is a firſt and ſelf-evident principle. This he frequently aſſerts throughout his Book.

§ 7. _Fifthly,_ That this way of Oral Tradition hath _de facto_ in all Ages been acknowledged by Chriſtians, as the onely way and means whereby the Doctrine of Chriſtianity hath been conveyed down to them. And this is that which he attempts to prove from the _Conſent of Authority._

§. 8. As for the Scriptures, he grants them indeed to have been written by men divinely inſpired, and to contain a Divine Doctrine, even the ſame * P. 117. which is delivered by Oral Tradition; ſo he tells us *, _'Tis certain the Apoſtles taught the ſame Doctrine they writ._ But then he denies it to be of any uſe without Oral Tradition, becauſe neither the _letter_, nor _ſenſe_ of it, can * P. 337. without that be aſcertain'd; ſo he ſaith in his Letter to Dr. _Caſaubon_ *, As _for the_ Scriptures _(aſcertaining their letter and ſenſe, which is done by Tradition) 'tis clear they are of imcomparable value; not only for the Divine Doctrine contained in them, but alſo for many particular paſſages, whoſe ſource or firſt atteſtation not being univerſal, nor their nature much practical, might poſſibly have been loſt in their conveyance down by Tradition._ Where, though he give the Scriptures very good words, it is to be underſtood, provided they will be ſubordinate, and acknowledge that they owe their ſenſe and their being intelligible and uſeful to Oral Tradition. For if any man ſhall preſume to ſay, that this Book hath any certain ſenſe without Oral Tradition; or that God can write plainly and intelligibly, and that this Book which he hath endited is ſo written, and doth not depend upon Tradition for its ſenſe and interpretation; then the moſt ſcurrilous language is not * Append.4th p. 319. bad enough for the Scripture; then what are thoſe Sacred Writings *, * P. 68. but _Ink variouſly figured in a Book_ *, _unſenſed Characters, waxen natur'd words, not yet ſenſed, nor having any certain Interpreter, but fit to be plaid upon diverſly by quirks of wit; that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing._ Theſe, with many other diſgraceful terms, he very liberally beſtows upon Divine Oracles; the conſideration whereof, did it not miniſter too much horrour, would afford ſome comfort; for by this kind of rude uſage, ſo familiar with him towards his adverſaries, one may reaſonably conjecture, that he doth not reckon the Scriptures among his Friends.

§. 9. And whereas he ſaith, _That the Scriptures have preſerv'd many particular paſſages, which becauſe their ſource or firſt atteſtation was not univerſal, nor their nature much practical, might poſſibly have been loſt in their conveyance down by Tradition_, this is impoſſible, according to his _Hipotheſis._ For if neither the Scriptures letter, nor the certain ſenſe of it as to the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine could have been ſecured without Oral Tradition; that is, if we could not have known that thoſe paſſages which contain the main points of Chriſt's Doctrine, either had been written by men divinely inſpired, or what the ſenſe of them was, but from the conſonancy and agreement of thoſe paſſages with the Doctrine which was orally preached by the Apoſtles; how can we be certain either of the letter or ſenſe of other particular paſſages which muſt neceſſarily want this confirmation from Oral Tradition, becauſe _their firſt atteſtation was not univerſal nor their nature much practical?_ Nay, his diſcourſe plainly implies, that we can have no ſecurity at all either of the letter or ſenſe of any other parts of Scripture, but only thoſe which are coincident with the main * P. 116. body of Chriſtian Doctrine, as is evident from theſe words *, _Tradition eſtabliſhed, the Church is provided of a certain and infallible Rule to preſerve a copy of the Scriptures Letter truely ſignificative of Chriſt's ſenſe, as far as it is coinci-_

coincident with the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine preached at firſt; becauſe *ſenſe writ in mens heart by Tradition, can eaſily guide them to correct the alteration of the outward letter.* This I perceive plainly is the thing they would be at, they would correct the *outward letter of Scripture* by *ſenſe written in the hearts*; and then inſtead of leaving out the ſecond commandment, they would change it into a precept of *given due worſhip to Images* acording to the *Council of Trent*; and a thouſand other alterations they muſt make in the *Bible* to make it *truly ſignificative of the ſenſe* of their *Church.* But ſurely the outward letter of other paſſages of Scripture, which were not intended to ſignifie points of Faith, is equally liable to alterations; and yet the Church is not by Tradition provided of any way to correct theſe alterations when they happen; becauſe Tradition doth, as this *Corollary* implies, only furniſh the Church with a certain and infallible Rule of preſerving a copy of the Scriptures letter, ſo far as it is coincident with the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine.

§. 10. Again he tells us *, *Tradition eſtabliſhed, the Church is provided of a certain and infallible Rule to interpret Scripture letter by, ſo as to arrive certainly at Chriſt's ſenſe as far as the letter concerns the body of Chriſtian Doctrine preached at firſt, or points requiſite to ſalvation.* * P. 117. So that whatever he may attribute to Scripture for faſhions ſake, and to *avoid Calumny with the Vulgar*, as he ſays very ingenuouſly in his explication of the 15*th* Corollary; nevertheleſs 'tis plain, that according to his own *Hypotheſis*, he cannot but look upon it as perfectly uſeleſs and pernicious. That 'tis altogether uſeleſs according to his *Hypotheſis*, is plain; for the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine is ſecurely conveyed to us without it, and it can give no kind of confirmation to it, becauſe it receives all its confirmation from it; onely the Church is ever and anon put to a great deal of trouble to correct the alteration of the outward letter, by tradition and ſenſe written in their hearts. And as for all other parts of Scripture which are not coincident with the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine, we can have no certainty, either that the outward letter is true; nor if we could, can we poſſibly arrive at any certain ſenſe of them. And that it is intolerably pernicious, according to his *Hypotheſis*, is plain, becauſe * *every ſilly and upſtart Hereſie fathers it ſelf upon it*; and when men leave Tradition (as he ſuppoſeth all Hereticks do) the Scripture is the moſt dangerous engine that could have been invented; being to ſuch Perſons onely * *waxen natured words, not ſenſed nor having any certain interpreter*; *but fit to be play'd upon diverſly by quirks of wit*; *that is, apt to blunder and confound, but to clear little or nothing.* And indeed, if his *Hopotheſis* were true, the Scriptures might well deſerve all the contemptuous language which he uſeth againſt them; and * Mr. *Whit's* compariſon of *them* with *Lilly's Almanack*, would not onely be pardonable, but proper; and (unleſs he added it out of prudence, and for the Peoples ſake, whom he may think too ſuperſtitiouſly conceited of thoſe Books) he might have ſpared that cold excuſe which he makes for uſing this ſimilitude, that *it was agreeable rather to the impertinency of the Objection than the dignity of the ſubject.* * Apology for Tradition. p. 165. Certain it is, if theſe men are true to their own principles, that notwithſtanding the high reverence and eſteem pretended to be born by them and their Church to the Scriptures, they muſt heartily deſpiſe them, and wiſh them out of the way, and even look upon it as a great overſight of the Divine Providence to trouble his Church with a Book, which, if their diſcourſe be of any conſequence, can ſtand Catholicks in no ſtead at all, and is ſo dangerous and miſchievous a weapon in the hands of Hereticks.

SECT. III.

The Proteſtant Doctrine concerning the *Rule of Faith.*

§. 1. HAving thus taken a veiw of his opinion, and conſidered how much he attributes to Oral Tradition, and how little to the Scriptures; before I aſſail this *Hypotheſis*, I ſhall lay down the Proteſtant *Rule of Faith*; not that ſo much is neceſſary for the anſwering of his Book, but that he may have no colour of objection, that I proceed altogether in the deſtructive way, and overthrow his *Principle*, as he calls it, without ſubſtituting another in its room. The opinion then of the Proteſtants concerning the *Rule of Faith*, is this in general, That thoſe Books which we call the Holy Scriptures, are the means whereby the Chriſtian Doctrine hath been brought down to us. And that he may now clearly underſtand this together with the grounds of it, (which in reaſon he ought to have done before he had forſaken us) I ſhall declare it more particularly in theſe following Propoſitions.

§. 2. 1. That the Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion was by Chriſt delivered to the Apoſtles, and by them firſt preached to the World, and afterwards by them committed to Writing; which Writings, or Books, have been tranſmitted from one Age to another down to us. So far I take to be granted by our preſent Adverſaries. That the Chriſtian Doctrine was by Chriſt delivered to the Apoſtles, and by them publiſh'd to the World, is part of their own *Hypotheſis*. That this Doctrine was afterwards by the Apoſtles committed to writing, he alſo grants, *Corol.* 29. * *'Tis certain the Apoſtles taught the ſame Doctrine they writ*, and if ſo, it muſt be as certain that they writ the ſame Doctrine which they taught. I know it is the general Tenet of the Papiſt, that the Scriptures do not contain the intire body of Chriſtian Doctrine; but that beſides the Doctrines contained in Scripture, there are alſo others brought down to us, by oral or unwritten Tradition. But Mr. *S.* who ſuppoſeth the whole Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion to be certainly conveyed down to us ſolely by oral Tradition, doth not any where, that, I remember, deny that all the ſame Doctrine is contained in the Scriptures; onely he denies the Scriptures to be a meanes ſufficient to convey this Doctrine to us with certainty, ſo that we can by them be infallibly aſſured what is Chriſt's Doctrine, and what not. Nay, he ſeems in that paſſage I laſt cited, to grant this; in ſaying, that the Apoſtles did both teach and write the ſame Doctrine. I am ſure Mr. *White* (whom he follows very cloſely throughout his whole Book) does not deny this, in his *Apology for Tradition*; * where he ſaith, that *it is not the Catholick poſition, that all its Doctrines are not contained in the Scriptures.* And that thoſe Writings or Books which we call the Holy Scriptures, have been tranſmitted down to us, is unqueſtionable matter of fact, and granted univerſally by the Papiſts, as to all thoſe Books which are owned by Proteſtants for Canonical.

* P. 117.

* P. 171.

§. 3. *Secondly*, That the way of Writing is a ſufficient means to convey a Doctrine to the knowledge of thoſe who live in times very remote from the Age of its firſt delivery. According to his *Hypotheſis*, there is no poſſible way of conveying a Doctrine with certainty and ſecurity, beſides that of oral Tradition; the falſhood of which will ſufficiently appear, when I ſhall have ſhewn, that the true properties of a Rule of Faith do agree to the Scriptures, and not to oral Tradition. In the mean time, I ſhall onely offer this to his conſideration, that whatever can be orally delivered in plain and intelligible words, may be written in the ſame words; and that a writing or Book which is publick, and in every ones hand, may be conveyed down with at leaſt as much certainty and ſecurity, and with as little danger of alteration as an oral Tradition, And if ſo, I underſtand not what can render it impoſſible for a Book to convey down a Doctrine to the knowledge of after-ages. Beſides, if he had looked well about him, he could not but have apprehended ſome little inconvenience in making that an eſſential part of his *Hypotheſis*, which is contradicted by plain and conſtant experience: For that any kind of Doctrine may be ſufficiently conveyed, by Books, to the knowledg of after-ages; provided thoſe Books be but written intelligibly, and preſerved from change and corruption in the conveyance, (both which I ſhall be ſo bold as to ſuppoſe poſſible) is as little doubted by the generality of mankind, as that their are Books. And ſurely we Chriſtians cannot think it impoſſible to convey a Doctrine to poſterity by Books, when we conſider that God himſelf pitched upon this way for conveyance of the Doctrine of the Jewiſh Religion to after-ages; becauſe it is not likely that ſo wiſe an Agent ſhould pitch upon a meanes whereby it was impoſſible he ſhould attain his end.

§. 4. *Thirdly*, That the Books of Scripture are ſufficiently plain, as to all things neceſſary to be believed, and practiced. He that denies this, ought in reaſon to inſtance in ſome neceſſary point of Faith, or matter of Practice, which is not in ſome place of Scripture or other plainly delivered. For it is not a ſufficient objection to ſay, * that the greateſt wits among the Proteſtants differ about the ſenſe of thoſe Texts, wherein the generality of them ſuppoſe the Divinity of Chriſt to be plainly and clearly expreſſed: Becauſe, if nothing were to be accounted ſufficiently plain, but what is it impoſſible a great wit ſhould be able to wreſt to any other ſenſe; not onely the the Scriptures, but all other Books; and (which is worſt of all to him that makes this objection) all oral Traditions would fall into uncertainty. Doth the Traditionary Church pretend that the Doctrine of Chriſt's Divinity is conveyed down to her by oral Tradition, more plainly than it is expreſſed in Scripture? I would fain know what plainer words ſhe ever uſed to expreſs this point of Faith by, than what the Scripture uſeth; which expreſly calls him *God, the true God, God over all, bleſſed for evermore.* If it be ſaid, that thoſe who deny the Divinity of Chriſt have been able to evade theſe and all other Texts of Scripture, but they could never elude the definitions of the Church in that matter; it is eaſily anſwered, that the ſame Arts would equally have eluded both; but there was no reaſon why they ſhould trouble themſelves ſo much about the latter; for why ſhould they be ſolicitous to wreſt the difinitions of *Councils*, and conform them to their own opinion, who had no regard to the Churches Authority? If thoſe *great wits* (as he calls them) had believed the ſayings of Scripture to be of no greater authority than the definitions of Councils, they would have anſwered texts of Scripture, as they have done the definitions of Councils; not by endeavouring to interpret them to another ſenſe, but by downright denying their Authority. So that it ſeems that *oral* Tradition is liable to the inconvenience with the *written*, as to this particular.

* P. 38, 39.

§. 5. And of this I ſhall give him a plain inſtance in two *great wits* of their Church, the *preſent Pope*, and Mr. *White*; the one the *Head* of the *Traditionary Church*, as Mr. *S.* calls it; the other the great *Maſter* of the *Traditionary Doctrine.* Theſe two *great wits*, the *Pope* and Mr. *White*, notwithſtanding the plainneſs of oral Tradition, and the impoſſibility of being ignorant of it, or miſtaking it, have yet been ſo unhappy as to differ about ſeveral points of Faith; inſomuch that Mr. *White* is unkindly cenſured for it at *Rome*, and perhaps here in *England* the Pope ſpeeds no better; however, the difference continues ſtill ſo wide, that Mr. *White* hath thought fit to diſobey the ſummons of his chief Paſtor, and like a prudent Man, rather to write againſt him here out of harms-way, than to venture the infallibility of plain *oral Tradition* for the *Doctrines* he maintains, againſt a *practical Tradition* which they have at *Rome* of killing Hereticks.

Methinks Mr. *S.* might have ſpared his brags, that he *hath evinced*
* P. 54. *from clear reaſon*, * *that it is far more impoſſible to make a man not to be, than not to know what is rivetted into his ſoul by ſo oft repeated ſenſations*, (as the Chriſtian Faith is by Oral and practical Tradition) *and that it exceeds all the power of Nature* (*abſtracting from the caſes of madneſs, and violent diſeaſe*) *to blot knowledge thus fixt out of the ſoul of one ſingle Beleiver*; inſomuch, *that ſooner may all mankind periſh, than the regulative vertue of Tradition miſcarry*; *nay, ſooner may the ſinews of entire nature by overſtraining crack, and ſhe loſe all her activity and motion*, that is, *her ſelf*; *than one ſingle part of that innumerable multitude which integrate the vaſt teſtification, which we call Tradition, can poſſibly be violated*; when after he hath told us,
* P. 116. * that the City of *Rome* was bleſt with *more vigorous cauſes to imprint Chriſt's Doctrine at firſt, and recommend it to the next Age, than were found any where elſe*; and conſequently, *that the ſtream of Tradition in its ſource and firſt putting into motion, was more particularly vigorous there than in any other See*; *and that the chief Paſtor of that See hath a particular Title to Infallibility built upon Tradition, above any other Paſtor whatſoever*; *not to dilate on the particular aſſiſtances to that Biſhop, ſpringing out of his divinly conſtituted Office*; when, I ſay, after all this quaint Reaſon and rumbling Rhetorick about the infallibility of Oral Tradition, and the particular infallibility of the Biſhop of *Rome* built on Tradition; we cannot but remember, that this great *Oracle* of *oral Tradition* the *Pope*, and this great *Maſter* of it, Mr. *White*, who is ſo peculiarly skill'd in the *Rule of Faith*, have ſo manifeſtly declar'd themſelves to differ in points of Faith. For that the *Pope* and his *Congregation general* at *Rome* have condemn'd all
* Mr. *Wh. Exetaſis.* P. 9. his Books for this reaſon, becauſe * *they contain ſeveral Propoſitions manifeſtly heretical*, is a ſign that theſe two *great Wits* do not very well hit it in matters of Faith; and either that they do not both agree in the ſame *Rule of Faith*, or that one of them does not rightly underſtand it or not follow it. And now, why may not that which Mr. *S.* unjuſtly ſays concerning the uſe of Scripture, be upon this account juſtly apply'd to the buſineſs of
P. 50. Oral Tradition *? If we ſee two *ſuch eminent Wits* among the *Papiſts* (the *Pope*, and Mr. *White*) *making uſe of the ſelf-ſame, and as they conceive, the beſt advantages* their *Rule of Faith* gives them; *and availing themſelves the beſt they can by acquired skills, yet differ* about matters of Faith; *what certainty can we undertakingly promiſe to weaker heads, that is to the generality* of the *Papiſts*, in whom the Governors of the Church do profeſſedly cheriſh ignorance for the increaſing of their devotion.

§. 6. *Fourthly*, We have ſufficient aſſurance that the Books of Scripture are conveyed down to us, without any material corruption or alteration. And he that denies this muſt either reject the authority of all Books, becauſe we cannot be certain whether they be the ſame now that they were at firſt; or elſe, give ſome probable reaſon why theſe ſhould be more liable to corruption than other. But any man that conſiders things, will eaſily find that it is much more improbable that theſe Books ſhould have been either wilfully or involuntarily corrupted, in any thing material to Faith or a good Life, than any other Books in the World; whether we conſider the peculiar Providence of God engaged for the preſervation of them, or the peculiar circumſtances of theſe Books. If they were written by men divinely inſpired, and are of uſe to Chriſtians, as is acknowledged (at leaſt in words) on all hands; nothing is more credible, than that the ſame Divine Providence which took care for the publiſhing of them, would likewiſe be concerned to preſerve them entire. And if we conſider the peculiar circumſtances of theſe Books, we ſhall find it morally impoſſible, that they ſhould have been materially corrupted, becauſe being of univerſal and mighty concernment, and at firſt diffuſed into many hands, and ſoon after tranſlated into moſt languages, and moſt paſſages in them cited in Books now extant, and all theſe now agreeing in all matters of importance, we have as great aſſurance as can be had concerning any thing of this nature, that they have not ſuffered any material alteration, and far greater than any man can have concerning the incorruption of their oral Tradition, as I ſhall ſhew when I come to anſwer the *thing* which he calls Demonſtration.

§. 7. *Fifthly,* That *de facto* the Scripture hath been acknowledged by all Chriſtians, in former Ages, to be the means whereby the doctrine of Chriſt hath with greateſt certainty been convey'd to them. One good evidence of this is, That the Primitive Adverſaries of Chriſtian Religion did always look upon the Scripture as the Standard and meaſure of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and in all their writing againſt Chriſtianity, took that for granted to be the Chriſtian Faith which was contained in thoſe Books; there having not as yet any Philoſopher riſen up who had demonſtrated to the World, that a Doctrine could not with ſufficient certainty and clearneſs be conveyed by writing from one age to another. But how abſurd had this method of confuting Chriſtian Religion been, if it had been then the publick profeſſion of Chriſtians, that the Scriptures were not the *Rule* of their Faith? How eaſie had it been for the Fathers, who apologized for, and defended Chriſtian Religion, to have told them they took a wrong meaſure of their Doctrine; for it was not the principle of Chriſtians, that their Faith was conveyed to them by the Scriptures, and therefore it was a fond undertaking to attack their Religion that way; but if they would effectually argue againſt it, they ought to enquire what that Doctrine was which was orally delivered from father to ſon, without which the Scriptures could ſignifie no more to them than an unknown *Cipher* without a *Key*; being of themſelves, without the light of Oral Tradition, onely an heap of unintelligible words, *unſenſed Characters*, and *Ink variouſly figured in a Book*; and therefore it was a groſs miſtake in them, to think they could underſtand the Chriſtian Religion (like their own Philoſophy) by reading of thoſe Books, or confute it by confuting them. Thus the *Fathers* might have defended their Religion; nay, they ought in all reaſon to have taken this courſe, and to have appealed from thoſe dead ſenſeleſs Books, to the *true Rule of Faith, the living voice of the Church Eſſential.* But doth Mr. *S.* find any thing to this purpoſe in the *Apologies* of the *Fathers*? If he hath diſcover'd any ſuch matter, he might do well to acquaint the World with it, and make them wiſer; in the mean time, I ſhall inform him what I have found, that the Fathers never except againſt that method, but appeal frequently from the ſlanderous reports and miſrepreſentations which were made of their Doctrine to the Books of Scripture, as the true ſtandard of it.

§. 8. Another *evidence* that Chriſtians in all Ages ſince the Apoſtles times, have owned the Scriptures for the *Rule of* their *Faith*, is, That the *Fathers* in their *Homilies* did uſe conſtantly to declare to the People what they were to beleive, and what they were to practiſe, out of the Scriptures; which had been moſt abſurd and ſenſleſs, had they beleived not the ſcriptures, but ſomething elſe to have been the Rule of Faith and Manners. For what could tend more to the ſeducing of the People from Mr. *S*'s ſuppoſed *Rule of Faith*, *Oral Tradition*, than to make a daily practice of declaring and confirming the Doctrines of the Chriſtian Faith from the Scriptures? Had the ancient Fathers been right for Mr. *S*'s way, they would not have built their Doctrine upon Scripture; perhaps not have mentioned it, for fear of giving the People an occaſion to grow familiar with ſo dangerous a Book; but rather (as their more prudent Poſterity have done) would have lock'd it up from the people in an unknown Tongue, and have ſet open the ſtores of good wholſome Traditions, and inſtead of telling them (as they do moſt frequently) *thus ſaith the Scripture*, would onely have told them, this is *the voice of the eſſential Church*; *thus it hath been delivered down by hand to us, from our Forefathers.*

§. 9. I might add for a *Third evidence*, the great malice of the Enemies and Perſecutors of Chriſtianity, againſt this Book; and their cruel endeavours to extort it out the hands of Chriſtians, and deſtroy it out of the World, that by this means they might extirpate Chriſtianity. For it ſeems they thought, that the aboliſhing of this Book would have been the ruine of that Religion. But (according to Mr. *S*'s opinion) their malice wanted wit; for had all the Bibles in the world been burnt, Chriſtian Religion would nevertheleſs have been entirely preſerv'd, and ſafely tranſmitted down to us *by ſenſe written in mens hearts*, with the good help of Mr. *S*'s Demonſtrations. Nay, their Church would have been a great gainer by it; For this Occaſion and Parent of all Hereſie the *Scripture*, being once out of the way, ſhe might have had all in her own hands, and by leading the people in the ſafe paths of Tradition, and conſequently of Science, might have made them wiſe enough to obey. Well, but ſuppoſe the Perſecutors of Chriſtianity miſtook themſelves in their deſign, how came the Chriſtians in thoſe dayes to be ſo tenacious of this Book, that rather than deliver it, they would yeild up themſelves to torments and death? And why did they look upon thoſe who out of fear delivered up their Books, as Apoſtates and Renouncers of Chriſtianity, and if they had not thought this Book to be the great inſtrument of their Faith and Salvation, and if it had really been of no greater conſideration than Mr. *W*. and Mr. *S*. would make it? why ſhould they be ſo loth to part with a few *unſens'd Characters*, *waxen natur'd words*, *to be play'd upon diverſly by quirks of wit*, that is, *apt to blunder and confound*, *but to clear little or nothing*? Why ſhould they value their lives at ſo cheap a rate as to throw them away for a few inſignificant ſcrawls, and ſhed their bloud for *a little Ink variouſly figured in a Book*? Did they not know, that the ſafety of Chriſtianity did not depend upon this Book? Did no Chriſtian then underſtand that, which (according to Mr. *S*.) no Chriſtian can be ignorant of, *viz*. that not the Scripture, *but unmiſtakeable*, *and indefectible oral Tradition* was the *Rule of Faith*? Why did they not conſider, that though this *Letter Rule* of Hereticks had been conſum'd to aſhes, yet their *Faith* would have lain ſafe, and *been preſerved entire* in its ** Spiritual Cauſes, Mens minds, the nobleſt peices in Nature?* Some of them indeed did deliver up their Books, and were call'd *Traditores*, and I have ſome ground to beleive, that theſe were the onely *Traditionary Chriſtians* of that time, and the reſt were Confeſſours and Martyrs for the *Letter Rule*. And if this be not evidence enough, that the Scriptures have always been acknowledged by Chriſtians for the Rule of Faith, I ſhall, when I come to examine his Teſtimonies for Tradition, (with the good leave of his *diſtinction* between *Speculators* and *Teſtifiers*) prove by moſt expreſs Teſtimony, that it was the general opinion of the Fathers, *that the Scriptures are the Rule of Chriſtian Faith*; and then, if his *demonſtration* of the infallibility of Tradition will enforce, that as *Teſtifiers* they muſt needs have ſpoke otherwiſe, who can help it?

SECT. IV.

How much Proteſtants allow to Oral Tradition.

§ 1. HAving thus laid down the *Proteſtant Rule of Faith*, with the grounds of it; all that now remains for me to do, towards the clear and full ſtating of the Controverſie between us, is to take notice briefly, and with due limitations:

1. How much the Proteſtants do allow to Oral Tradition.

Secondly, what thoſe things are which Mr. *S.* thinks fit to attribute to his *Rule of Faith*, which we ſee no cauſe to attribute to ours; And when this is done, any one may eaſily diſcern how far we differ.

§. 2. I. How much Proteſtants do allow to Oral Tradition.

Firſt, We grant that Oral Tradition in ſome circumſtances, may be a ſufficient way of conveying a Doctrines; but withal we deny, that ſuch circumſtances are now in being. In the firſt Ages of the World, when the *credenda* or *Articles* of Religion, and the *Agenda* or *Precepts* of it, were but few, and ſuch as had the evidence of Natural light; When the World was contracted into a few Families in compariſon, and the age of man ordinarily extended to ſix or ſeven hundred years; it is eaſie to imagine, how ſuch a Doctrine, in ſuch circumſtances, might have been propagated by Oral Tradition, without any great change or alterations. *Adam* lived till *Methuſelah* was above two hundred years old, *Methuſelah* lived till *Sem* was near an hundred, and *Sem* out-liv'd *Abraham*: So that this Tradition need not paſs through more than two hands, betwixt *Adam* and *Abraham*. But though this way was *ſufficient* to have preſerved Religion in the world, if men had not been wanting themſelves; yet we find it did not prove *effectual*. For through the corruption and negligence of men after the Flood, (if not before) when the world began to multiply, and the age of man was ſhortned, the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God was generally loſt in the world. And ſo far as appears by Scripture-Hiſtory, (the onely Record we have of thoſe times) when God called out *Abraham* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*, the whole world was lapſed into Polytheiſme and Idolatry. Therefore for the greater ſecurity of Religion afterwards, when the poſterity of *Abraham* was multiplied into a great Nation, the wiſdom of God did not think fit to entruſt the Doctrine of Religion any longer to the fallible and uncertain way of Tradition, but committed it to writing. Now that God pitched upon this way, after the world had ſadly experienced the unſucceſsfulneſs of the other, ſeems to be a very good evidence that this was the better and more ſecure way: it being the uſual method of the Divine diſpenſations, not to go backwards, but to move towards perfection, and to proceed from that which is leſs perfect to that which is more. And the Apoſtles* reaſoning concerning the two Covenants is very applicable to theſe two methods of conveying the Doctrine of Religion; *if the firſt had been faultleſs, then ſhould no place have been ſought for a ſecond.*

* Heb. 8. 7.

§. 3. So likewiſe, when Chriſt revealed his Doctrine to the world, it was not in his life-time committed to writing; becauſe it was entertained but by a few, who were his diſciples and followers, and who ſo long as he continued with them had a living Oracle to teach them. After his death, the Apoſtles, who were to publiſh this Doctrine to the World, were aſſiſted by an infallible Spirit, ſo as they were ſecured from error and miſtake in the delivery of it. But when this extraordinary aſſiſtance failed, there was need of ſome other means to convey it to poſterity, that ſo it might be a fixt and ſtanding Rule of Faith and Manners to the end of the World. To this end the providence of God took care to have it committed to writing. And that Mr. *S.* may ſee this is not a conjecture of Proteſtants, but the ſenſe of former times, I ſhall refer him to St. *Chryſoſtom*, (*Homil.* 1. *in Matth.*) who tells us, *That Chriſt left nothing in writing to his Apoſtles; but in ſtead thereof did promiſe to beſtow upon them the grace of his holy Spirit, ſaying,* John 14. He ſhall bring all things to your remembrance, &c. *But becauſe in progreſs of time there were many grievous miſcarriages both in matter of Opinion, and alſo of Life and Manners; therefore it was requiſite that the memory of this Doctrine ſhould be preſerved by writing.* So long then as the Apoſtles lived, who were thus infallibly aſſiſted, the way of Oral Tradition was ſecure, but no longer; nor even then from the nature of the thing, but from that extraordinary and ſupernatural aſſiſtance which accompanied the deliverers.

§. 4. And therefore it is no good way of Argument againſt the way of Tradition by writing, which he lays ſo much weight upon, * *That the Apoſtles and their Succeſſors went not with Books in their hands to preach and deliver Chriſt's Doctrine, but words in their mouths; and that primitive antiquity learned their faith by another method, a long time before many of thoſe Books were univerſally ſpread among the vulgar.* For what if there was no need of writing this Doctrine, whilſt thoſe living Oracles, the Apoſtles, were preſent with the Church? Doth it therefore follow that there was no need of it afterwards when the Apoſtles were dead, and that extraordinary and ſupernatural aſſiſtance was ceaſed? If the Preachers now a-days could give us any ſuch aſſurance, and confirm all they preach by ſuch frequent, and publick, and unqueſtionable Miracles as the Apoſtles did; then we need not examine the Doctrines they taught by any other Rule, but ought to regulate our belief by what they delivered to us: But ſeeing this is not the caſe, *that* ought in all reaſon to be the Rule of our Faith, which hath brought down to us the Doctrine of Chriſt with the greateſt certainty: And this I ſhall prove the Scriptures to have done.

* P. 40.

§. 5. So that in thoſe circumſtances I have mentioned, *We* allow Oral Tradition to have been a ſufficient way of conveying a Doctrine; but now conſidering the great increaſe of mankind, and the ſhortneſs of mans life in theſe latter ages of the world, and the long tract of time from the Apoſtles age down to us; and the innumerable accidents whereby, in the ſpace of 1500 years, Oral Tradition might receive inſenſible alterations, ſo as at laſt to become quite another thing from what it was at firſt, by paſſing through many hands: in which paſſage, all the miſtakes and corruptions which (in the ſeveral Ages through which it was tranſmitted) did happen, either through Ignorance, or Forgetfulneſs, or out of intereſt and deſign, are neceſſarily derived into the laſt: So that the farther it goes, the more alteration it is liable to; becauſe as it paſſeth along, more Errours and Corruptions are infuſed into it. I ſay, conſidering all this, we deny, that the Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion could with any probable ſecurity and certainty have been conveyed down to us by the way of Oral Tradition. And therefore do reaſonably believe, that God fore-ſeeing this, did in his wiſdom ſo order things, that thoſe perſons who were aſſiſted by an infallible ſpirit in the delivery of this Doctrine, ſhould before they left the world commit it to writing; which was accordingly done: And by this Inſtrument, the Doctrine of Faith hath been conveyed down to us.

§. 6. *Secondly*, We allow, that Tradition, *Oral* and *Written*, do give us ſufficient aſſurance that the Books of Scripture which we now have, are the very Books which were written by the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts: Nay farther, that *Oral* Tradition alone is a competent evidence in this caſe; but withal we deny, That Oral Tradition is therefore to be accounted the *Rule of Faith.*

The general Aſſurance that we have concerning Books written long ago, that they are ſo ancient, and were written by thoſe whoſe names they bear, is a conſtant and uncontroll'd Tradition of this, tranſmitted from one Age to another; partly Orally, and partly by the Teſtimony of other Books. Thus much is common to Scripture with other Books. But then the Scriptures have this peculiar advantage above other Books, that being of a greater and more univerſal concernment, they have been more common and in every bodies hands, more read and ſtudied than any other Books in the World whatſoever; and conſequently, they have a more univerſal and better grounded atteſtation. Moreover, they have not only been owned univerſally in all Ages by Chriſtians (except three or four Books of them, which for ſome time were queſtioned by ſome Churches, but have ſince been generally received) but the greateſt Enemies of our Religion, the Jews and Heathens, never queſtioned the Antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, that they were the very Books which the Apoſtles writ. And this is as great an aſſurance as we can have concerning any ancient Book, without a particular and immediate Revelation.

§. 7. And this Conceſſion doth not, as Mr. *S.* ſuppoſeth, make Oral Tradition to be finally the *Rule of Faith*; for the meaning of this queſtion, (*What is the Rule of Faith?*) Is, What is the next and immediate means whereby the knowledge of Chriſt's Doctrine is conveyed to us? So that although Oral Tradition be the means whereby we come to know that theſe are the Books of Scripture yet theſe Books are the next and immediate means whereby we come to know what is Chriſt's Doctrine; and conſequently, what we are to beleive.

§ 8. Nor doth this Conceſſion make Oral Tradition to be the *Rule of Faith*, by a Parity of Reaſon; as if becauſe we acknowledge that Oral Tradition alone can with competent certainty tranſmit a Book to After-Ages, we muſt therefore grant that it can with as much certainty convey a Doctrine conſiſting of ſeveral Articles of Faith (nay very many as Mr. *White* acknowledges [*]) and many Laws and Precepts of Life: So becauſe Oral Tradition ſufficiently aſſure us that *this* is *Magna Charta*, and

[*] *Ruſhw.* Dial. 4. Sect. 9.

and *that* the *Statute-Book*, in which are contain'd *thoſe Laws which it concerns every man to be skilful in*; therefore by like parity of Reaſon it muſt follow, that Tradition it ſelf is better than a Book, even *the beſt way imaginable, to convey down ſuch Laws to us.* Mr. *S.* ſaith * expreſly it is; but how truly, I appeal to experience, and the wiſdom of all Law-givers, who ſeem to think otherwiſe. Tradition is already defin'd to us, *a delivery down from hand to hand, of the ſenſe and faith of Fore-fathers*; i. e. of the Goſpel, or meſſage of Chriſt. Now ſuppoſe any Oral meſſage, conſiſting of an hundred particularities, were to be delivered to an hundred ſeveral perſons of different degrees of underſtanding and memory, by them to be conveyed to an hundred more, who were to convey it to others, and ſo onwards, to a hundred deſcents; Is it probable this Meſſage, with all the particularities of it, would be as truly conveyed through ſo many mouths, as if it were written down in ſo many Letters, concerning which every Bearer ſhould need to ſay no more than this, That it was delivered to him as a Letter written by him whoſe name was ſubſcribed to it? I think it not probable, though the mens lives were concerned every one for the faithful delivery of his Errand or Letter. For the *Letter* is a meſſage which no man can miſtake in, unleſs he will; but the *Errand* ſo difficult, and perplexed with its multitude of particulars, that it is an equal wager againſt every one of the Meſſengers, that he either forgets, or miſtakes ſomething in it; it is ten thouſand to one, that the firſt Hundred do not all agree in it; it is a Million to one, that the next Succeſſion do not all deliver it truly; for if any one of the firſt Hundred miſtook, or forgot any thing, it is then impoſſible that he that received it from him ſhould deliver it right; and ſo the farther it goes, the greater change it is liable to. Yet after all this I do not ſay, but it may be demonſtrated, in Mr. *S*'s way, to have more of certainty in it than the Original Letter.

§. 9. *Thirdly*, We allow, That the Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion hath in all Ages been preached to the People by the Paſtors of the Church, and taught by Chriſtian Parents to their Children; but with great difference; by ſome more plainly, and truly, and perfectly; by others, with leſs care and exactneſs, according to the different degrees of ability and integrity in Paſtors or Parents; and likewiſe with very different ſucceſs, according to the different capacities and diſpoſitions of the Learners. We allow likewiſe, That there hath been a conſtant courſe of viſible actions, conformable in ſome meaſure to the Principles of Chriſtianity; but then we ſay that thoſe outward acts and circumſtances of Religion may have undergone great variations, and received great change, by addition to them, and defalcation from them, in ſeveral Ages. That this not only is poſſible, but hath actually happened, I ſhall ſhew when I come to anſwer his Demonſtrations. Now that ſeveral of the main Doctrines of Faith contained in the Scripture, and actions therein commanded, have been taught and practiſed by Chriſtians in all Ages (as the Articles ſummed up in the Apoſtles Creed, the uſe of the two Sacraments) is a good evidence ſo far, that the Scriptures contain the Doctrine of Chriſtian Religion. But then if we conſider, how we come to know that ſuch points of Faith have been taught, and ſuch external Actions practiſed in all Ages, it is not enough to ſay, there is a preſent multitude of Chriſtians that profeſs to have received ſuch Doctrines as ever believed and practiſed, and from hence to infer that they were ſo; the inconſequence of which Argument, I ſhall have a better occaſion to ſhew afterwards: But he that will prove this to any mans ſatisfaction, muſt make it evident from the beſt Monuments and Records of ſeveral Ages, that is, from the moſt Authentick Books of thoſe times, that ſuch Doctrines have in all thoſe Ages been conſtantly and univerſally taught and practiſed. But then if from thoſe Records of former times it appear, that other Doctrines, not contained in the Scriptures, were not taught and practiſed univerſally in all ages, but have crept in by degrees, ſome in one Age, and ſome in another, according as Ignorance and Superſtition in the People, Ambition and Intereſt in the chief Paſtors of the Church, have miniſtred occaſion and opporunity; and that the Innovators of theſe Doctrines and Practices, have all along pretended to confirm them out of Scripture, as the acknowledged *Rule of Faith*; and have likewiſe acknowledged the Books of Scripture to have deſcended without any material corruption or alteration, (all which will ſufficiently appear in the proceſs of my Diſcourſe) then cannot the Oral and Practical Tradition of then preſent Church, concerning any Doctrine, as ever beleived and practiſed, which hath no real foundation in Scripture, be any argument againſt theſe Books, as if they did not fully and clearly contain the Chriſtian Doctrine. And to ſay the Scripture is to be interpreted by Oral and Practical Tradition, is no more reaſonable, than it would be to interpret the ancient Books of the Law, by the preſent practice of it; which every one, that compares things fairly together, muſt acknowledge to be full of deviations from the ancient Law.

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* P. 23.

SECT. V.

§. 1. *2dly.* HOw much more he attributes to his Rule of Faith, than we think fit to attribute to ours.

How much Mr. *S.* attributes to his Rule of Faith, more than Proteſtants to theirs.

1. We do not ſay, that it is impoſſible in the nature of the thing, that this Rule ſhould fail, that is, either that theſe Books ſhould ceaſe to deſcend, or ſhould be corrupted. This we do not attribute to them, becauſe there is no need we ſhould. We beleive the Providence of God will take care of them, and ſecure them from being either loſt, or materially corrupted; yet we think it very poſſible, that all the Books in the World may be burnt or otherwiſe deſtroyed. All that we affirm concerning our Rule of Faith, is that it is abundantly ſufficient (if men be not wanting to themſelves) to convey the Chriſtian Doctrine to all ſucceſſive Ages; and we think him very unreaſonable that expects that God ſhould do more than what is abundantly enough, for the perpetuating of Chriſtian Religion in the world.

§. 2. *Secondly*, Nor do we ſay, that that certainty and aſſurance which we have, that theſe Books are the ſame that were written by the Apoſtles is a *firſt* and *ſelf evident Principle*; but only that it is a truth capable of evidence ſufficent, and as much as we can have for a thing of that nature. Mr. *S.* may, if he pleaſe, ſay that Traditions certainty is a firſt and ſelf-evident Principle; but then he that ſays this, ſhould take heed how he takes upon him to demonſtrate it. *Ariſtotle* was ſo wiſe as never to demonſtrate firſt Principles, for which he gives this very good reaſon, becauſe they cannot be demonſtrated. And moſt prudent men are of opinion, that a ſelf-evident Principle, of all things in the World, ſhould not be demonſtrated, becauſe it needs not. For to what purpoſe ſhould a man write a Book to prove that which every man muſt aſſent to, without any proof, ſo ſoon as it is propounded to him? I have always taken a ſelf-evident Principle to be ſuch a Propoſition; as having in it ſelf ſufficient evidence of its own truth, and not needing to be made evident by any thing elſe. If I be herein miſtaken, I deſire Mr. *S.* to inform me better.

§. 3. So that the true ſtate of the Controverſie between us, is, Whether *Oral* and *Practical Tradition*, in oppoſition to *Writing Books*, be the only way and means whereby the Doctrine of Chriſt can with certainty and ſecurity be conveyed down to us, who live at this diſtance from the Age of Chriſt and his Apoſtles; This *He* affirms, and the *Proteſtants* deny; not only that it is the ſole means, but that it is ſufficient for the certain conveyance of this Doctrine; and withal affirm, that this Doctrine hath been conveyed down to us by the Books of holy Scripture, as the proper meaſure and ſtandard of our Religion: But then they do not exclude Oral Tradition from being one means of conveying to us the certain knowledge of theſe Books. Nor do they exclude the authentick Records of former Ages, nor the conſtant teaching and practice of this Doctrine, from being ſubordinate means and helps of conveying it from one Age to another. Nay, ſo far are they from excluding theſe concurrent means, that they ſuppoſe them always to have been uſed, and to have been of great advantage for the propagating and explaining of this Doctrine, ſo far as they have been truly ſubordinate to, and regulated by theſe ſacred Oracles, the Holy Scriptures; which, they ſay, do truly and fully contain that Doctrine which Chriſt delivered to his Apoſtles, and they preached to the world. To illuſtrate this by an inſtance; ſuppoſe there were a Controverſie now on foot, how men might come to know what was the true *Art* of *Logick* which *Ariſtole* taught his *Scholars*; and ſome ſhould be of opinion, that the only way to know this would be by Oral Tradition from his Scholars; which he might eaſily underſtand by conſulting thoſe of the preſent Age, who learned it from thoſe who received it from them, who at laſt had it from *Ariſtotle* himſelf: But others ſhould think it the ſureſt way to ſtudy his *Organon*, a Book acknowledged by all his Scholars, to have been written by himſelf, and to contain that Doctrine which he taught them. They, who take this latter courſe, ſuppoſe the authority of Oral Tradition, for the conveying to them the knowledge of this Book; and do ſuppoſe this Doctrine to have been taught and practiſed in all Ages, and a great many Books to have been written by way of Comment and explication of this Doctrine; and that theſe have been good helps of promoting the knowledge of it. And they may well enough ſuppoſe all this, and yet be of opinion that the trueſt meaſure and ſtandard of *Ariſtotle*'s Doctrine is his own Book; and that it would be a fond thing in any man, by forcing an interpretation upon his Book either contrary to, or very foreign and remote from the obvious ſenſe of his words, to go about to reconcile this Book with that method of diſputing which is uſed by the profeſſed *Ariſtotelians* of the preſent age, and with all that Scholaſtick *Jargon* which Mr. *S.* learn'd at *Lisbon*, and has made him ſo great a man in the *Science of Controverſie*, as even to enable him to demonſtrate *firſt* and ſelf-evident Principles; a trick not to be learn'd out of *Ariſtotle*'s *Organon*. the Application is ſo eaſie, that I need not make it.

THE

THE RULE OF FAITH.

PART. II.

Concerning the Properties of the Rule of Faith; and whether they agree ſolely to Oral Tradition.

SECT. I.

§. 1. HAving thus endeavoured to bring the Controverſie between us, to its clear and true ſtate, that ſo we might not quarrel in the dark, and diſpute about we know not what; I come now to grapple more cloſely with his Book. And the main foundations of his Diſcourſe may be reduced to theſe three Heads.

Firſt, That the eſſential Properties of ſuch a way and means, as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the Doctrine of Chriſt, belong ſolely to Oral Tradition. This he endeavours to prove in his *five* firſt *Diſcourſes.*

Secondly, That it is impoſſible that this way of Oral Tradition ſhould fail. And this he pretends to prove in his *four* laſt *Diſcourſes.*

Thirdly, That Oral Tradition hath been generally reputed by Chriſtians in all Ages, the ſole way and meanes of conveying down to them the Doctrine of Chriſt. And this he attempts to ſhew in his laſt Chapter, which he calls *The Conſent of Authority to the ſubſtance of his foregoing diſcourſes.* If he make good theſe three things, he hath acquitted himſelf well in his undertaking. But whether he hath made them good or not, is now to be examined,

§. 2. *Firſt*, Whether the eſſential Properties of ſuch a way and means, as can with certainty and ſecurity convey down to us the knowledge of Chriſt's Doctrine, belong ſolely to Oral Tradition?

The true way to meaſure the eſſential Properties of this or that means, is by conſidering its ſufficiency for its end. For whatſoever is neceſſary to make any means ſufficient for the obtaining of its end, is to be reputed an eſſential Property of that Means, and nothing elſe. Now, becauſe the end we are ſpeaking of, is the conveyance of the knowledge of Chriſt's Doctrine to all thoſe who are concerned to know it, in ſuch a manner as they may be ſufficiently certain and ſecure that it hath received no change or corruption from what it was when it was firſt delivered. From hence it appears, that the means to this end muſt have theſe two Properties. 1. It muſt be ſufficiently plain and intelligible. *2ly.* It muſt be ſufficiently certain to us, *that is*, ſuch as we may be fully ſatisfied concerning it that it hath received no corruption or alteration. If it have theſe two conditions it is ſufficient for its end; but if it want either of them, it muſt neceſſarily fall ſhort of its end. For if it be not plain and intelligible, it cannot convey this Doctrine to our knowledge; if it be not certain, we cannot be aſſured, that that Doctrine which it brings down to us for the Doctrine of Chriſt, is really ſuch.

§. 3. I know he aſſigns more Properties of this Means which he calls *the Rule of Faith*; but upon examination it will appear, that they either fall in with theſe two, or do not at all belong to it. As,

* P. 11. *Firſt*. That * *it muſt be plain and ſelf-evident to all, as to its exiſtence.* Nothing can be more frivolous, than to make this a Property of any thing; becauſe whoſoever enquires into the Properties of a thing is ſuppoſed to be already ſatisfied that the thing is.

* P. 11. * P. 3. *Secondly*, That it be * *evidenceable, as to its Ruling Power*, that is, as he explains himſelf, * *that men be capable of knowing, that it deſerves to be relied on as a Rule.* By which he muſt either underſtand the certainty of it; and then it falls in with the ſecond Property I mentioned, and is the ſame with the ſixth, which *he* lays down. Or elſe he means more generally, that it is the property of a Rule, that men be capable of knowing that it hath the Properties of a Rule. For I underſtand not, how a man can know that any thing deſerves to be relyed on as a Rule, otherwiſe than by knowing it hath the properties of a Rule, *that is*, that it is ſufficient for its end. But at this rate, a man may multiply the Properties of things without end, if the evidence of a thing, as to its exiſtence, be one property; and then, that we be capable of knowing that it is ſuch a thing, be another.

* P. 12. §. 4. *Thirdly*, That it be * *apt to ſettle, and juſtify undoubting Perſons*, What he means here, by *ſetling undoubting Perſons*, I am not able, on the ſudden, to comprehend; becauſe I underſtand not what unſettles a man beſides doubting: for if a man be but ſo well ſatisfied about any thing, as to have no doubt concerning it, I do not eaſily apprehend how he can be ſettled better, *that is* how his mind can be more at reſt, than not to doubt. But if by *undoubting Perſons*, he means thoſe who do not doubt for the preſent, but afterwards may doubt, then I perceive what he means by *apt to ſettle undoubting Perſons*, viz. *apt to ſettle Perſons when they do doubt*, *that is*, when they are *not undoubting Perſons*. As for *juſtifying undoubting Perſons*, if he means that whoſoever ſecurely relies on this Rule, ought of right to be acquitted, as acting rationally in ſo doing; this is plainly conſequent upon the two Properties I have laid down. For, if the means of conveying Chriſt's Doctrine be ſufficiently plain and certain, every man that relies upon it is juſtified in ſo doing, becauſe he truſts a means which is ſufficient for its end.

* P. 12. §, 5. *Fourthly*, That * it be *apt to ſatisfie fully the moſt Sceptical Diſſenters, and Rational Doubters*: For its aptitude to ſatisfie *Rational Doubters*, that plainly follows from the ſufficient certainty of it. But why it ſhould a neceſſary property of a Rule of Faith, to be apt to ſatisfie *the moſt Sceptical*

tical Diſſenter, I can no more divine, than I can, why he ſhould call a *Diſſenter Sceptical*, which are repugnant terms: For a Sceptick is one who neither aſſents to any thing, nor diſſents, but is in a perpetual ſuſpence; becauſe he looks upon every opinion, as balanced by a contrary opinion of equal probability, without any inclination of the Scales either way, But if by *the moſt Sceptical Diſſenter* he means only a Sceptick, one that doth not believe the Doctrine of Chriſt, nor any thing elſe; then would I fain know, what that is which in reaſon is apt fully to ſatisfie ſuch a perſon. If any thing will, ſure a Demonſtration will; but there is no aptitude at all in a Demonſtration, to ſatisfie him who doubts whether there be any ſuch thing as a Demonſtration; and likewiſe queſtions the certainty of all thoſe Principles, from whence any concluſion can be demonſtrated. And thoſe who are *moſt Sceptical*, profeſs to doubt of all this.

§. 6. *Fifthly*, That it * be *apt to convince the moſt obſtinate, and acute Adverſary*. * P. 11, 13. If the Rule be plain and certain, the moſt *acute Adverſary* may be convinced by it if he will, *that is*, if he be not obſtinate; but if he be obſtinate, *that is*, ſuch a one as will not be convinced, but will perſiſt in his Errour in diſpite of all evidence that can be offered him, then I muſt profeſs that I do not know any kind of evidence that is apt to convince that man that will not be convinced by any reaſon that can be propounded to him. And that he ought not to have expected this from any *Rule of Faith*, though never ſo ſelf evident, he might have learn't from the ſame *Authour*, in whom he may find his chief *Properties of the Rule of Faith*, if he had but had the patience to have conſider'd his explication of them; I mean Dr. *Holden* *, who lays down the Second Property of *the Rule of Faith*, (or, as he calls it, *the means whereby we come to the knowledge of Revealed Truth*) in theſe words, *Another* (*viz.* condition of this Means, *&c.*) *is*, *That it be apt of its own Nature, to afford the greateſt, true and rational certainty, to all men without exception to whom the knowledge of it ſhall come; provided they be furniſh'd with the faculty of Reaſon, and have their minds purified from all Paſſion and Luſt, which do* (as he tells us *Cap.* 6.) *often hinder the moſt ſagacious Perſons from underſtanding the moſt evident and manifeſt Truths.* Now I ſuppoſe *obſtinacy* to be the effect of *paſſion* and *Luſt*.

* Analyſ. Fid. L. 1. c. 3.

If Mr. *S.* mean, that *the Rule of Faith* muſt be apt to conquer *Obſtinacy*, and make men lay it aſide, I cannot underſtand this neither; unleſs he mean that *the Rule of Faith* muſt be a *Cudgel*, which the Traditionary Church have been good at, and may uſe it again when occaſion ſerves; for none but they have Title to it *upon a Church-account*, as Mr. *S.* tells us, *Corol.* 10. But ſetting aſide *this*, I do not know any thing elſe that is *apt to conquer Obſtinacy*: Not the cleareſt Reaſon, or the ſtrongeſt Demonſtration; for that I am ſure is no ways fitted to combate a wilful and unreaſonable humour with any probability of ſucceſs. And if any one doubt of this, if he will but make trial, he may eaſily be convinc'd by experience, how unapt obſtinate Perſons are to be convinc'd by Reaſon. I do not know any thing that ever carried greater evidence than the Doctrine of Chriſt, preached by himſelf and his Apoſtles to the obſtinate *Jews*, and confirmed by multitudes of unqueſtionable miracles; and yet we do not find by the ſucceſs of it, that it was ſo very apt to convince thoſe that were obſtinate. And no man can judge of the aptitude of a means to an end, otherwiſe than by the uſual and frequent ſucceſs of it when it is applied. Nor do I think that the Doctrine of the Goſpel was ever intended for that purpoſe. God hath provided no remedy for the wilful and perverſe, but he hath done that which is ſufficient for the ſatisfying and winning over of thoſe who are teachable and willing to learn: And ſuch a diſpoſition ſuppoſeth a man to have laid aſide both *Septiciſm* and *Obſtinacy*.

* P. 12. §. 7. *Sixthly*, That * it be *certain in it ſelf.*

* P. 12. *Seventhly*, That * it be *abſolutely aſcertainable to us.*

Theſe *two* are comprehended in the ſecond Property I laid down; ſo that I have nothing to ſay againſt them, but that the laſt looks very like a contradiction, *abſolutely aſcertainable to us*; which is to ſay, *with reſpect to us*, *without reſpect to us*; for *abſolutely* ſeems to exclude reſpect, and *to us* implies it.

Having thus ſhewn, that the ſeven *Properties* he mentions, are either coincident with thoſe two I have laid down, or conſequent upon them, or abſurd and impertinent; it remains, that the true Properties of a *Rule of Faith* are thoſe two which I firſt named, and no more.

SECT. II.

That the Properties of a Rule of Faith belong to Scripture.

§. 1. LET us now ſee how he endeavours to ſhew, that theſe Properties agree ſolely to Oral Tradition: He tells us there are but *two Pretenders* to this *Title* of being *the Rule of Faith*, *Scripture*, and *Oral Tradition*; theſe *Properties* do not belong to *Scripture*, and they do to *Oral Tradition*; therefore ſolely to it. A very good Argument, if he can prove theſe *two* things, *That theſe two Properties do not belong to Scripture*; *and that they do to Oral Tradition.*

* P. 13. §. 2. In order to the proving of the *Firſt*, that theſe Properties do not belong to Scripture, he premiſeth this Note, * *That we cannot by the Scriptures mean the ſenſe of them, but the Book*, that is, *ſuch or ſuch Characters not yet ſenſed*, *or interpreted.* But why can we not, by the Scriptures, mean the ſenſe of them? He gives this clear and admirable reaſon; becauſe the ſenſe of Scripture, is, *the things to be known, and theſe we confeſs are the very points of Faith, of which the Rule of Faith is to aſcertain us.* Which is juſt as if a man ſhould reaſon thus: Thoſe who ſay the Statute-Book can convey to them the knowledge of the Statute-Law, cannot by the Satute-Book mean the ſenſe of it, but the Book; that is, ſuch or ſuch Characters not yet ſenſed or interpreted: Becauſe the ſenſe of the Statute-Book is the thing to be known; and theſe are the very Laws, the knowledge whereof is to be conveyed to them by this Book; which is to ſay, that a Book cannot convey to a man the knowledge of any matter, becauſe if it did, it would convey to him the thing to be known. But that he may farther ſee what excellent reaſoning this is, I ſhall apply this *Paragraph* to Oral Tradition; for the Argument holds every whit as well concerning that. *To ſpeak to them in their own language, who ſay* that Oral Tradition *is their Rule, we muſt premiſe this Note, that they cannot mean by* Oral Tradition, *the ſenſe of it, that is, the things to be known*; *for thoſe, they confeſs, are the very Points of Faith, of which the Rule of Faith is to aſcertain us*; *when they ſay then, that* Oral Tradition *is the Rule of Faith, they can onely mean by* Oral Tradition, the words wherein it is delivered, *not yet ſenſed or interpreted, but as yet to be ſenſed*; *that is, ſuch or ſuch* ſounds, *with their aptneſs to ſignifie to them aſſuredly God's mind, or aſcertain them of their Faith*; *for abſtracting from the ſenſe, and actual ſignification of thoſe words, there is nothing imaginable left but thoſe ſounds, with their aptneſs to ſignifie it.* When he hath

anſwered this Argument, he will have anſwered his own. In the mean while this Diſcourſe, that he who holds the Scriptures to be the Rule of Faith, muſt needs by the Scriptures mean a Book void of Senſe, *&c.* Becauſe otherwiſe if by Scripture he ſhould underſtand a Book, that hath a certain ſenſe in it, that ſenſe muſt be the Doctrine of Chriſt, which is the very thing that this Book is to convey to us; I ſay, this Diſcourſe tends onely to prove it an abſurd thing for any man, that holds Scripture the means of conveying Chriſt's Doctrine, to underſtand by the Scripture, a Book that conveys Chriſt's Doctrine. This being his own reaſon, put into plain Engliſh, I leave the Reader to judge whether it be not ſomething ſhort of *perfect Science and Demonſtration.* Nay, if it were throughly examined, I doubt whether it would not fall ſhort of that low pitch of Science which he ſpeaks of in his *Preface*, where he tells us, that *the way of Science is to proceed from one piece of ſenſe to another.*

§. 3. Having premiſed this, that by the Scriptures *we* muſt mean onely dead Characters, that have no ſenſe under them, *He* proceeds to ſhew that theſe dead Characters have not the Properties of a Rule of Faith belonging to them. Which, although it be nothing to the purpoſe when he hath ſhewn it, yet it is very pleaſant to obſerve, by what croſs and untoward Arguments he goes about it: Of which I will give the Reader a taſte, by one or two inſtances.

In the firſt place he ſhews, that it cannot be evident to us that *theſe Books were written by men divinely inſpired,* becauſe * *till the ſeeming contradictions in thoſe Books are ſolved; which to do, is one of the moſt difficult tasks in the world, they cannot be concluded to be of God's enditing.* Now how is this an Argument againſt thoſe, who by the Scriptures, muſt mean unſenſed letters and characters? I had always thought contradictions had been in the *ſenſe* of words, not in the *letters* and *characters*; but I perceive he hath a peculiar opinion, that the four and twenty letters do contradict one another. * P. 14.

The other inſtance ſhall be in his laſt Argument *, which is this, that the Scripture cannot be the *Rule of Faith*, becauſe *thoſe who are to be ruled and guided by the Scriptures letter to Faith*, cannot be *certain of the true ſenſe of it*; which is to ſay, that *unſenſed letters and characters* cannot be the *Rule of Faith* becauſe the *Rule of Faith* muſt have a certain ſenſe, *that is,* muſt not be *unſenſed letters and characters*; which in plain Engliſh amounts to thus much, unſenſed letters and characters *cannot* be the *Rule of Faith, that they cannot.* * P. 17.

§. 4. And thus I might trace him through all his Properties of the *Rule of Faith*; and let the Reader ſee, how incomparably he demonſtrates the falſhood of this Proteſtant Tenet (as he calls it) that a ſenſeleſs Book may be a *Rule of Faith.* But I am weary of purſuing him in theſe airy and phantaſtical combats, and ſhall leave him to fight with his own fancies, and batter down the Caſtles which himſelf hath built. Onely I think fit here to acquaint him, once for all, with a great Secret of the Proteſtant Doctrine, which it ſeems he hath hitherto been ignorant of (for I am ſtill more confirmed in my opinion, that he forſook our Religion before he underſtood it) that when they ſay, the Scriptures are the *Rule of Faith*, or the means whereby Chriſt's Doctrine is conveyed down to them, they mean by the Scriptures, Books written in ſuch words as do ſufficiently expreſs the ſenſe and meaning of Chriſt's Doctrine.

§. 5. And to ſatisfie him, that we are not abſurd and unreaſonable in ſuppoſing the Scriptures to be ſuch a Book, I would beg the favour of him to grant me theſe four things, or ſhew reaſon to the contrary.

Firſt, That whatever can be ſpoken in plain and intelligible words, and ſuch as have a certain ſenſe, may be written in the ſame words.

Secondly, That the ſame words are as intelligible when they are written as when they are ſpoken.

Thirdly, That God, if he pleaſe, can endite a Book in as plain words as any of his creatures.

Fourthly, That we have no reaſon to think that God affects obſcurity, and envies that men ſhould underſtand him, in thoſe things which are neceſſary for them to know, and which muſt have been written to no purpoſe, if we cannot underſtand them. St. *Luke* * tells *Theophilus*, that he wrote the Hiſtory of Chriſt to him, on purpoſe to give him a *certain knowledge* of thoſe things which he writ. But how a Book which hath no *certain ſenſe*, ſhould give a man *certain knowledge* of things, is beyond my capacity. St. *John* * ſaith, that he purpoſely committed ſeveral of *Chriſt*'s miracles to Writing, that men might believe on *Him*. But now had Mr. *S.* been at his elbow, he would have adviſed him to ſpare his labour, and would have given him this good reaſon for it; becauſe when he had written his Book, no body would be able to find the certain ſenſe of it without oral Tradition, and that alone would ſecurely and intelligibly convey both the Doctrine of Chriſt, and the certain knowledge of thoſe miracles which he wrought for the confirmation of it. If theſe four things be but granted, I ſee not why, when we ſay that the Scriptures are the means of conveying to us Chriſt's Doctrine, we may not be allow'd to underſtand by the Scriptures, a Book which doth in plain and intelligible words expreſs to us this Doctrine.

* Luke 1. 3,4.

* Joh. 20. 31.

SECT. III.

Mr. S's Exceptions againſt Scripture examined.

§. 1. AND now, although this might have been a ſufficient Anſwer to his Exceptions againſt the Scriptures, as being incapable of the Properties of a *Rule of Faith*; becauſe all of them ſuppoſe that which is apparently falſe and abſurd, as granted by Proteſtants, *viz.* That the Scriptures are onely an heap of dead letters, and inſignificant characters, without any ſenſe under them; and that oral Tradition is that onely which gives them life and ſenſe; Yet becauſe ſeveral of his Exceptions pretend to ſhew, that the true Properties of a Rule of Faith do not at all appertain to the Scriptures; therefore I ſhall give particular Anſwers to them; and as I go along, ſhew that Tradition is liable to all or moſt of thoſe Exceptions, and to far greater than thoſe.

§. 2. Whereas he ſays, * it cannot be evident to Proteſtants, from their Principles, that the Books of Scripture were originally written by men divinely inſpired; I will ſhew him that it may, and then anſwer the reaſons of this Exception.

* P. 13.

It is evident, from an univerſal, conſtant, and uncontrolled Tradition among Chriſtians, not onely oral, but written, and from the acknowledgement of the greateſt Adverſaries of our Religion, that theſe Books were originally written by the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts. And this is not onely a Proteſtant Principle, but the Principle of all mankind, *That an undoubted Tradition is ſufficient evidence of the Antiquity and Authour of a Book*

Book, and all the extrinſecal Argument that can ordinarily be had of a Book written long ago.

Next, it is evident that the Apoſtles were men divinely inſpired, *that is*, ſecured from errour and miſtake in the writing of this Doctrine, from the miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it. Becauſe it is unreaſonable to imagine that the Divine power ſhould ſo remarkably interpoſe for the confirmation of a Doctrine, and give ſo eminent an atteſtation to the Apoſtles to convince the World, that they were immediately appointed and commiſſioned by God, and yet not ſecure them from errour in the delivery of it. And that ſuch miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible Hiſtories as we have for any of thoſe things which we do moſt firmly believe. And this is better evidence that the Apoſtles were men divinely inſpired, than bare oral Tradition can furniſh us withal. For ſetting aſide the authentick relation of theſe matters in Books, it is moſt probable, that oral Tradition of it ſelf and without Books, would ſcarce have preſerved the memory of any of thoſe particular miracles of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, which are recorded in Scripture. And for the probability of this, I offer theſe two things to his conſideration.

Firſt, No man can deny that memorable perſons have lived, and actions been done in the World innumerable, whereof no Hiſtory now extant makes any mention.

Secondly, He himſelf will grant, that our Saviour wrought innumerable more miracles, than are recorded in Scripture. And now I challenge him to ſhew the ſingle virtue of Oral Tradition, by giving an account of any of thoſe perſons, or their actions, who lived 1500 or 2000 years ago, beſides thoſe which are mentioned in Books; or to give a catalogue but of ten of thoſe innumerable miracles wrought by our Saviour, which are not recorded by the Evangeliſts, with circumſtances as punctual and particular as thoſe are clothed withal. If he can do this, it will be a good evidence that Oral Tradition ſingly and by it ſelf can do ſomething; but if he cannot, 'tis as plain an evidence on the contrary, that if thoſe actions of former times, and thoſe miracles of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, which are recorded in Book had never been written, but entruſted ſolely to Oral Tradition, we ſhould have heard as little of them at this day, as we do of thoſe that were not written.

§. 3. Now to examine his Reaſons for this Exception:

Firſt, He ſaith, * *'tis moſt* manifeſt that this cannot be made evident to the *vulgar*, that Scripture was written by men divinely inſpired. This Reaſon is as eaſily anſwered, by ſaying *'tis moſt manifeſt that it can*: But beſides ſaying ſo, I have ſhewed how it may be made as evident to the vulgar, as other things which they do moſt firmly and upon good grounds believe. Even the rudeſt of the vulgar, and thoſe who cannot read, do believe upon very good grounds that there was ſuch a King as *William the Conqueror*; and the Miracles of Chriſt and his Apoſtles are capable of as good evidence as we have for this. * P. 13.

Secondly, He ſays, * this cannot be evident to the *curious and moſt ſpeculative Searchers, but by ſo deep an inſpection into the ſenſe of Scripture, as ſhall diſcover ſuch ſecrets, that Philoſophy, and humane Induſtry could never have arrived to.* As if we could not be aſſured that any thing were written by men divinely inſpired, unleſs it were above the reach of humane underſtanding; and as if no man could know that this was our Saviour's Doctrine, *Whatever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, that do ye likewiſe unto* * P. 13.

them, becauſe every one can underſtand it. But if there were more myſteries in the Scriptures than there are, I hope a man might be ſatisfied that they were written by men divinely inſpired, without a clear comprehenſion of all thoſe myſteries. The evidence of the inſpiration of any perſon doth not depend upon the plainneſs or ſublimity of the things revealed to him, but upon the goodneſs of the arguments which tend to perſwade us that the perſon is ſo inſpired: And the Argument that is moſt fit to ſatisfie us of that is, if he work miracles. Now I would gladly know why a learned man cannot be aſſured of a Miracle, *that is,* a plain ſenſible matter of Fact done long ago, but *by ſo deep an inſpection into the ſenſe of Scripture, as ſhall diſcover ſuch ſecrets that Philoſophy and humane Induſtry could never have arrived to.*

* P. 14. §.4. *Thirdly,*Becauſe * *all the ſeeming contradictions of Scripture muſt be ſolved,before we can out of the bare letter conclude the Scripture to be of God's enditing*; *to ſolve which literally, plainly, and ſatisfactorily* (he tells us) *the memory of ſo many particulars,which made them clearer to thoſe of the Age in which they were written,and the matter known,muſt needs be ſo worn out by tract of time, that it is one of the moſt difficult tasks in the World.* As if we could not believe a Book to be of God's enditing,becauſe there ſeem now to be ſome contradictions in it,which we have reaſon to believe could eaſily have been ſolved by thoſe who lived in the Age in which it was written. Or as if Oral Tradition could help a man to ſolve theſe contradictions,when the memory of particulars neceſſary for the clear ſolution of them is (as himſelf confeſſes) worn out by tract of time. If Mr. *S.* can, in order to the ſolution of the ſeeming contradictions of Scripture, *demonſtrate*, that Oral Tradition hath to this day preſerved the memory of thoſe particulars (neceſſary for that purpoſe) the memory of which muſt needs be long ſince worn out by tract of time; then I will readily yield, that his Rule of Faith hath in this particular, the advantage of *ours.* But if he cannot do this, why does he make that an Argument againſt *our* Rule, which is as ſtrong againſt *his own*? This is juſt like Capt. *Everard*s Friend's way of arguing againſt the *Proteſtants,* That they cannot rely upon Scripture becauſe it is full of plain contradictions, impoſſible to be reconciled; and therefore they ought in all reaſon to ſubmit to the infallibility of the Church, And for an inſtance of ſuch a contradiction, he pitched upon the three *fourteen Generations* mentioned in the firſt of St. *Matthew,* becauſe the third *Series* of Generations, if they be counted, will be found to be but thirteen. Not to mention now, how this difficulty hath been ſufficiently ſatisfied both by Proteſtant and Popiſh Commentators, without any recourſe to *Oral Tradition*; that which I take notice of, is the unreaſonableneſs of making this an Exception againſt the Proteſtants when it comes with every whit as much force upon themſelves. Suppoſe this Contradiction not capable of any ſolution by Proteſtants (as he affirms) and I ſhould ſubmit to the infallibility of the Church; can he aſſure me, that infallibility can make Thirteen, Fourteen? If it cannot, how am I nearer ſatisfaction in this point, by acknowledging the infallibility of the Church? The caſe is the very ſame, as to Mr. *S*'s Exception, if I owned Oral Tradition, I ſhould be never the nearer ſolving the ſeeming contradictions of Scripture, and conſequently I could not in *Reaſon conclude it to be of God's enditing.* So that in truth, theſe exceptions if they were true, would not ſtrike at Proteſtancy, but at Chriſtian Religion; which is the general unhappineſs of moſt of the Popiſh Arguments; than which there is no greater evidence, that the Church of *Rome* is not the

true Mother, becauſe ſhe had rather Chriſtianity ſhould be deſtroyed, than it ſhould appear that any other Church hath a claim to it. It was a work very proper for the Heretick *Marcion*, to aſſault Religion this way; who, as *Tertullian* * tells us, writ a whole Book, which he call'd *Antitheſes*, wherein he reckoned up all the Contradictions (as he thought) between the Old and New Teſtament: But methinks it is very improper for the Papiſts who pretend to be the onely true Chriſtians in the World, to ſtrain their wits to diſcover as many contradictions as they can in the Scripture, and to prove that there is no way of reconciling them: The natural conſequence of which is, the expoſing of this *ſacred Inſtrument of our Religion*, and even *Chriſtianity* it ſelf, to the ſcorn of Atheiſts. Therefore, to be very plain with Mr. *S.* and Captain *Everard*, I am heartily ſorry to ſee, that one of the chief fruits of their Converſion is to abuſe the Bible.

§. 5. *Secondly*, He ſays * that Proteſtants cannot know *how many* the Books of Scripture *ought to be*, and *which of the many controverted ones may be ſecurely put in that Catalogue, which not*; This he proves, by ſaying, *'tis moſt palpable, that few, or at leaſt the rude vulgar, can never be aſſured of it.* And if this be a good Argument, this again is a good Anſwer, to ſay it is not moſt palpable. But I ſhall deal more liberally, and tell him, that we know that juſt ſo many ought to be received as uncontroverted Books, concerning which, it cannot be ſhewn there was ever any Controverſie: and ſo many as controverted, concerning which it appears that Queſtion hath been made: And if thoſe which have been controverted, have been ſince received by thoſe Churches which once doubted of them, there is now no farther doubt concerning them, becauſe the Controverſie about them is at an end. And now I would fain know, what greater certainty Oral Tradition can give us of the true Catalogue of the Books of Scripture. For it muſt either acknowledge ſome Books have been controverted, or not; if not, why doth he make a ſuppoſition of controverted Books? If Oral Tradition acknowledge ſome to have been controverted, then it cannot aſſure us that they have not been controverted; nor conſequently, that they ought to be received as never having been controverted; but only as ſuch, concerning which thoſe Churches who did once raiſe a Controverſie about them, have been ſince ſatisfied that they are Canonical. The Traditionary Church *now*, receives the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* as Canonical. I ask, Do they receive it as ever delivered for ſuch? That they muſt, if they receive it from Oral Tradition, which conveys things to them under this notion, as ever delivered; and yet St. *Hierom* ſpeaking, (not as a *Speculator*, but a *Teſtifier*) ſaith expreſly of it, * *That the cuſtom of the Latin Church doth not receive it among the Canonical Scriptures.* What ſaith Mr. *S.* to this? It is clear from this Teſtimony, that the *Roman* Church in St. *Hierom*'s time, did not acknowledge this *Epiſtle* for Canonical; and 'tis as plain, that the preſent *Roman* Church doth receive it for Canonical. Where is then the *infallibity* of *Oral Tradition*? How does the *living voice of the preſent Church* aſſure us, that what Books are now received by her were ever received by her? And if it cannot do this, but the matter muſt come to be tryed by the beſt Records of former Ages, (which the Proteſtants are willing to have the Catalogue tried by) then it ſeems the Proteſtants have a better way to know what Books are Canonical, than is the infallible way of oral Tradition, and ſo long as 'tis better, no matter though it be not called Infallible.

§. 6. *Thirdly*,

* L. 1. contr. Marcion.

* P. 14.

* Com. in Eſai. c. 6. & c. 8.

§. 6. *Thirdly*, He ſays * the Proteſtants cannot know, *that the very Original, or a perfectly true copy of theſe Books hath been preſerved.* It is not neceſſary that they ſhould know either of theſe, it is ſufficient that they know that thoſe copies which they have, are not materially corrupted in any matter of Faith or Practice; and that they have ſufficient aſſurance of this, I have already ſhewn. And how doth he prove the contrary? By his uſual Argument, with ſaying *it is manifeſtly impoſſible.* But how do the Church of *Rome* know that they have perfectly true copies of the Scriptures,in the Original Languages? They do not pretend to know this; the learned men of that Church acknowledge the various Readings as well as we, and do not pretend to know otherwiſe than by probable conjecture, (as we alſo may do) which of thoſe Readings is the true one. And why ſhould it be more neceſſary for us to know this, than for them? If they think it reaſonable to content themſelves with knowing, that no material corruptions have crept into thoſe Books, ſo may we. And that there have not, we know by better Arguments than oral Tradition, even by the aſſurance we have of God's vigilant providence; and from a moral impoſſibility in the thing, that a Book ſo univerſally diſperſed, and tranſlated into ſo many Languages, and conſtantly read in the Aſſemblies of Chriſtians, ſhould have been materially corrupted, ſo as that all thoſe copies and tranſlations ſhould have agreed in thoſe corruptions. And this reaſon St. *Auſtin* * gives of the preſervation of the Scriptures entire rather then any other Book. If Mr. *S.* likes it not, he may call St. *Auſtin* to account for it.

§. 7. *Fourthly*, He ſays *, the Proteſtants, *at leaſt the rudeſt vulgar*, can have no aſſurance *that thoſe Books are rightly tranſlated*, becauſe they cannot be aſſured either of the ability or integrity of Tranſlators.

Fifthly, Nor *can they* (ſays * he) *be aſſured, That the Tranſcribers, and Printers, and Correctors* of the Preſs have carefully and faithfully done their part, in Tranſcribing and Printing the ſeveral Copies and Tranſlations of Scripture aright: Becauſe, *they onely can have evidence of the right letter of Scripture, who ſtood at their elbows attentively watching they ſhould not err in making it perfectly like a former Copy*; *and even then, why might they not miſtruſt their own eyes and aptneſs to overſee*? I put theſe two exceptions together, becauſe the ſame Anſwer will ſerve them both. The grounds of theſe Exceptions, if they have any, are theſe: That no man is to be truſted, either for his ſkill, or honeſty. And, that it is dangerous for men to truſt their own eyes. Unleſs both theſe be true, theſe Exceptions are of no force: For if we can be aſſured, that other men have ſufficient ſkill in any thing which we our ſelves do not ſufficiently underſtand, we may be aſſured, that thoſe who tranſlated the Bible had ſkill in the Original Languages; becauſe very credible perſons tell us ſo; and we have no reaſon to doubt their teſtimony in this particular, more than in any other matter. So that if we can have ſufficient aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing, we have no reaſon to doubt of the ſkill of Tranſlators, Tranſcribers, or Printers. And if we can have no aſſurance of mens integrity in any thing,then no man can be aſſured there was ſuch a man as *Henry* the *Eight*; and yet I hope the Church of *Rome* makes no doubt of it: Nor can any man be aſſured, there is ſuch a City as *Rome*, who hath not ſeen it; nay if he have *, *why may he not miſtruſt his own eyes*? and which is the ſaddeſt inconvenience of all, if no body be to be truſted, nor *mens own eyes*, (and for the ſame reaſon, ſure not their *ears*) what becomes of the infallibility of *oral and practical Tradition*? which neceſſarily

* P. 15.

* Ep. 48.

* P. 15.

* P. 16, 17.

* P. 16.

neceſſarily ſuppoſeth a competent underſtanding, a faithful memory, an honeſt mind, in the generality of thoſe who delivered Chriſt's Doctrine down to us: And by what means ſoever a man can be aſſured of theſe, by the ſame he may much more eaſily be aſſured of the ability and integrity of Tranſlators, Tranſcribers, and Printers. But above all, it ſuppoſeth that mens *ears* and *eyes* cannot deceive them in thoſe things which they are taught, and ſee practiſed.

Is it not very pretty to ſee what pitiful ſhifts men that ſerve an *Hypotheſis* are put to? When to maintain *Infallibility* they are forced to run to the *extremities of Scepticiſm*; and to defend the certainty of oral Tradition, (which depends upon the certainty of mens ſenſes, and an aſſurance of the ability and integrity of thoſe who were dead Fifteen Hundred years before we were born) are glad to take refuge in Principles quite contrary; ſuch as theſe, That we can have no aſſurance, but that whole Profeſſions of men * *might hap to be Knaves*; that we can have no ſufficient evidence that any man made his *Copy perfectly like the former*, unleſs * *we ſtood at his elbow, attentively watching him*: Nay, and if we did ſo, we have ſtill reaſon to diſtruſt our ſenſes. In ſhort, all humane Faith ſuppoſeth honeſty among men; and that for matters of Fact, and plain objects of ſenſe, the general and uncontrolled teſtimony of mankind is to be credited; and for matters of peculiar skill and knowledge, that the generality of thoſe who are accounted skilfull in that kind, are to be relied upon: For, as *Ariſtotle* well obſerves, there is no greater ſign of an *undiſciplin'd wit* (or, to uſe one of Mr. *S*'s fine phraſes *, of a man *not acquainted with the paths of Science*) than to expect greater evidence for things than they are capable of. Every man hath reaſon to be aſſured of a thing which is capable of ſufficient evidence, when he hath as much evidence for it as the nature of that thing will bear, and as the capacity he is in will permit him to have. And, as Mr. *White* ſays well, * *Satisfaction is to be given to every one according to his capacity; it is ſufficient for a Child to believe his Parents; for a Clown to believe his Preacher.* And this is univerſally true in all caſes, where we have not better or equal evidence to the contrary. But ſuch is the unhappineſs of the Popiſh Doctrines, that if people were permitted the free uſe of the Scripture, they would eaſily diſcern them to have no probable foundation in it, and to be plainly contrary to it; ſo that it cannot be ſafe for their Preachers to tell the people that the Scripture is the onely *Rule of Faith*, leſt they ſhould find cauſe not to believe them, when they teach Doctrines ſo plainly contrary to that Rule.

* P. 16.
* P. 16.
* Preface.
* Anſw. to the Lord *Falkland* P. 33.

§. 8. *Laſtly*, He ſays *, the Proteſtants cannot be *certain of the true ſenſe of Scripture*. Does he mean of plain Texts, or obſcure ones? Of the true ſenſe of plain Texts, I hope every one may be certain; and for obſcure ones, it is not neceſſary every one ſhould. But it may be there are no plain Texts in the Scriptures; then the reaſon of it muſt be (till Mr. *S.* can ſhew a better) either becauſe it is impoſſible for any one to write plainly, or becauſe God cannot write ſo plainly as men; or becauſe we have good reaſon to think that he would not write things neceſſary for every one to believe, ſo as men might clearly underſtand him.

* P. 17.

But he tells us, * *The numerous comments upon Scripture* are an evidence that no man can be certain of the true ſenſe of it. I hope not; for if thoſe numerous Commentators do generally agree in the ſenſe of *Plain* Texts (as 'tis certain they do) then this Argument ſignifies nothing as to ſuch Texts: And as for thoſe which are *obſcure*, let Commentators differ

* P. 17.

differ about them as much as they pleaſe, ſo long as all neceſſary Points of Faith and matters of Practice are delivered in plain Texts. He adds *, *There are infinite diſputes about the ſenſe of Scripture, even in moſt concerning Points, as in that of Chriſt's Divinity.* But are not Commentators, both Proteſtants and Popiſh, generally agreed about the ſenſe of Scripture in that Point? and what if ſome out of prejudice do miſtake, or out of perverſeneſs do wreſt the plaineſt Text of Scripture for the Divinity of Chriſt, to another ſenſe? Is this any argument that thoſe Texts are not ſufficiently plain? Can any thing be ſpoken or written in words ſo clear from ambiguity, which a perverſe or prejudiced mind ſhall not be able to vex and force to another meaning? God did not write the Scriptures for the froward and the captious but for thoſe who will read them with a free and unprejudiced mind, and are willing to come to the knowledge of the Truth. If Mr. *S.* had been converſant in the writings of the Fathers, he could not but have taken notice with what confidence they attempted to prove the Divinity of Chriſt out of Scripture, as if that did afford convincing arguments for this purpoſe. St. *Chryſoſtome* * profeſſes to demonſtrate out of Scripture, *That the Son is of the ſame ſubſtance with the Father*; and relies upon Scripture alone for this, without mentioning any other kind of Argument. So that it ſeems St. *Chryſoſtome* was not acquainted with the inſufficiency of Scripture for the conviction of Hereticks in this Point; and that *he* was either ignorant of the (*infallible*) way of demonſtrating this point from Oral Tradition, or had no great opinion of it. The ſame *Father* elſewhere *, arguing againſt Hereticks about the Divinity of Chriſt, ſays, *That they pervert the Scriptures, to ſtrengthen there Hereſie from thence.* But then he does not (with Mr. *S.*) blame the Scripture, and ſay that this Doctrine is not there deliver'd with ſufficient clearneſs; but contrarywiſe he ſays, *That the Scripture is clear enough, but the corrupt minds of Hereticks will not ſee what is there contain'd.* Had St. *Chryſoſtome* been a true ſon of the Traditionary Church, he would have laid hold of this occaſion, to vilifie the Scriptures, and to ſhew the neceſſity of regulating of our Faith not by ſuch uncertain *Records*, but by the infallible *Reports* of Oral Tradition.

* P. 17.

* Hom. 32. de Conſubſtant.

* Hom. 7. de Sancto *Phoca*.

§. 9. But becauſe Mr. *S.* lays great weight (in ſeveral parts of his Book) upon this Exception againſt Scripture, *viz. That Proteſtants cannot be certain of the true ſenſe of it*: Therefore I ſhall not content my ſelf, onely to have ſhewn that we may be ſufficiently certain of the ſenſe of Scripture, ſo far as to underſtand all neceſſary matters of Faith and Practice, and that more than this is not neceſſary; but ſhall likewiſe return this Exception upon him by enquiring into theſe two things.

1. How the Traditionary Church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of Scripture, than the Proteſtants?

2. How they can be more certain of the true ſenſe of Tradition, than Proteſtants of the true ſenſe of Scripture?

1. How the *Traditionary Church* can be more certain of true ſenſe of Scripture, than *Proteſtants*? *They* pretend to have an Oral Tradition of the true ſenſe of it, delivered down from Father to Son. But this only reacheth to thoſe Texts, which are coincident with the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine; as for all other parts of Scripture, they are as uſeleſs to Papiſts, as they ſuppoſe they are to us; becauſe wanting the help of Oral Tradition, they cannot be certain of one tittle of them. And as for thoſe Texts, the ſenſe whereof is conveyed down by Oral Tradition; this ſenſe is, I hope, delivered in ſome words or other; And have all

Preachers, and Fathers, and Mothers, and Nurſes, the faculty of delivering this ſenſe in words ſo plain as cannot poſſibly be miſtaken or wreſted to another ſenſe? I am ſorry that when every one hath this faculty of ſpeaking their thoughts plainly, the Holy Ghoſt ſhould be repreſented as not able to convey his mind to men in intelligible words. And does not his own Objection rebound upon himſelf? If the Church have a certain ſenſe of Scripture orally delivered, whence are the numerous Comments of the Fathers upon it, and of later Writers of their Church, and the infinite Diſputes about the ſenſe of it, in the moſt concerning Points? *viz. The efficacy of God's grace, the Supremacy of St.* Peter, *the infallibility of a Pope and Council by immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt?* What a ſtir is made about the ſenſe of *Dabo tibi Claves, Tu es Petrus, & ſuper hanc Petram,* &c. *Paſce oves?* Do not they differ about the meaning of theſe Texts among themſelves, as much as they do from the Fathers, and from the Proteſtants? Some underſtanding them of St.*Peter's* Supremacy onely; others of his infallibility; others of his infallibility onely in and with a general Council; which yet others do not allow to Pope or Council, from any immediate aſſiſtance, but onely from the rational force of Tradition, ſuppoſing that the Pope and Council hold to it. If oral Tradition have brought down a certain ſenſe of theſe Texts, why do they not produce it, and agree in it? If it have not (to uſe a hot phraſe of his own *) *'tis perfect phrenzy to ſay they can be certain of the true ſenſe of Scripture.* * P. 17.

If he ſay, they are by Tradition made certain of the true ſenſe of Scripture, *ſo far as it concerns the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine,* and do all agree in it, and that is ſufficient; then I ask him, What are thoſe points of Faith which make up the body of Chriſtian Doctrine? He will tell me, they are thoſe which all Catholicks agree to have deſcended to to them from the Apoſtles by a conſtant and uninterrupted Tradition. I enquire farther, how I ſhall know what is the certain ſenſe of Scripture ſo far as it concerns theſe points? He muſt anſwer as before, that *that* is the true ſenſe which all Catholicks agree to have deſcended to them by Tradition. Which amounts to this, that *all* Catholicks do agree in the ſenſe of Scripture ſo far as they do *all* agree in it. It is to be hoped, that the Proteſtants (how much ſoever at preſent they differ about the ſenſe of Scripture) may in time come to as good an agreement as this. This brings to my remembrance a paſſage or two of Mr. *Creſſy*; the one in his *Appendix* *, where he tells us, *That as it is impoſſible that Hereticks ſhould agree any other way than in Faction; ſo it is impoſſible that Catholicks ſhould differ in points of Faith.* Why ſo? Were not thoſe Catholicks firſt, who afterwards became Hereticks; and when they became ſo, did they not differ in points of Belief? Yes; but here lies the conceit, when they began to differ, then they ceas'd to be Catholicks; therefore Catholicks can never differ in points of Faith. The other paſſage is where he ſays *, That he *hath forſaken a Church where Unity was impoſſible,* &c. *and betaken himſelf to a Church where Schiſm is impoſſible.* This laſt Clauſe, *That Schiſm is impoſſible in their Church,* cannot poſſibly be true but in the ſame abſurd and ludicrous ſenſe, in which it is impoſſible for Catholicks to differ in points of Belief. For he cannot deny, but that it is poſſible for men to break off from the Communion of their Church, which in his ſenſe is Schiſm; but here is the ſubtilty of it, No Schiſmatick is of their Church, becauſe ſo ſoon as he is a Schiſmatick he is out of it; therefore Schiſm is impoſſible in their Church. And is it not as impoſſible

* Exomolog. 2d. Edit. p. 554.

* Exomolog. c. 53. Sect. 2.

ble in the Church of *England*? Where Mr. *Cr.* might have done well to have continued, till he could have given a wiſer reaſon of forſaking Her.

§. 10. But to return to our purpoſe. Mr. *Ruſhworth* * acknowledgeth, that the Scripture is of it ſelf ſufficiently plain, as to matters of practice; for he asks, *Who is ſo blind, as not to ſee that theſe things are to be found in Scripture by a ſenſible, common, and diſcreet reading of it; though perhaps by a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular word and ſyllable, any of theſe things would vaniſh away we know not how?* So that for the direction of our lives and actions, *he* confeſſeth the Scripture to be ſufficiently plain, if men will but read it *ſenſibly* and *diſcreetly*; and (*he* ſays) that he is blind that does not ſee this. But who ſo blind as he that *will* not ſee, that the ſenſe of Scripture is as plain in all neceſſary points of Faith? I am ſure St. *Auſtin* makes no difference, when he tells us *, That *in thoſe things which are plainly ſet down in Scripture, we may find all thoſe things in which Faith and Manners of life are comprehended.* And why cannot men, in reference to matters of Faith as well as of Practice, read the Scriptures *ſenſibly* and *diſcreetly* without ſuch a *rigorous balancing of every word and ſyllable*, as will make the ſenſe *vaniſh away we know not how?* If the Scripture be but ſufficiently plain to ſuch as will uſe it *ſenſibly and diſcreetly*, I do not underſtand what greater plainneſs can be deſir'd in a Rule: Nor can I imagine what kind of Rule it muſt be that can be unexceptionably plain to captious Cavillers, and ſuch as are bent to play the fool with it.

* Dial. 2. Sect. 12.

* De Doctr. Chriſt. L. 2.

Well, ſuppoſe the Scripture be not ſufficiently clear as to matters of Faith: and hereupon I have recourſe to the Church for the true ſenſe of Scripture: Muſt I believe the Churches ſenſe to be the true ſenſe of ſuch a Text, though I ſee it to be plainly contrary to the genuine ſenſe of the words? yes, that I muſt, or elſe I make my ſelf and not the Church judge of the ſenſe of Scripture, which is the grand Hereſie of the Proteſtants. But then I muſt not ſuppoſe, much leſs believe, that the Churches ſenſe of ſuch a Text is contrary to the genuine meaning of it; no, although I plainly ſee it to be ſo: This is hard again on the other hand; eſpecially if that be true which is acknowledged both by Dr. *Holden*, and Mr. *Creſſy*, *viz.* That though general Councils cannot miſtake in the Points of Faith which they decree, yet they may miſtake in the confirmation of them from Texts of Scripture, that is, they may be miſtaken about the ſenſe of thoſe Texts. And if Mr. *S.* think his Brethren have granted too much, he may ſee this exemplified in the ſecond Council of *Nice* (to mention no other) which, to eſtabliſh their Doctrine of Image-worſhip, does ſo palpably abuſe and wreſt Texts of Scripture, that I can hardly believe that any Papiſt in the World hath the forehead to own that for the true ſenſe of thoſe Texts which is there given by thoſe Fathers.

§. 11. *Secondly*, How the Traditionary Church can be more certain of the true ſenſe of their Traditional Doctrines, than the Proteſtants can be of the true ſenſe of Scripture? And this is worthy our enquiry because if the buſineſs be ſearch'd to the bottom, it will appear (beſides all other inconveniences, which oral Tradition is much more liable to than Scripture) that the certain ſenſe and meaning of Traditional Doctrine is as hard to come at as the ſenſe of Scripture. And this I will make appear by neceſſary conſequence from their own Conceſſions. Mr. *White*, and Mr. *S.* ſay that the great ſecurity of Tradition is this, that it is not tied to certain phraſes, and ſet-forms of expreſſion, but the ſame ſenſe is conveyed and ſetled in mens hearts by various expreſſions. But according to Mr. *Ruſhworth*, this renders Tradition's ſenſe uncertain; for *he* ſays *, *'Tis impoſſible to put fully, and beyond all quarrel, the ſame ſenſe in divers words.* So that if men do not receive Tradition in a *ſenſible, common, diſcreet* way (as Mr. *Ruſhworth* ſpeaks concerning reading the Scriptures) but will come to *a rigorous and exact balancing of every particular phraſe, word, and ſyllable,* the ſenſe of Tradition will be in the very ſame danger of uncertainty, and be liable *to vaniſh we know not how.* Dr. *Holden* * lays down theſe two Principles. Firſt, *That no truth can be conveyed down from man to man but by ſpeech; and ſpeech cannot be but by words; and all words are either equivocal in themſelves, or liable to be differently underſtood by ſeveral perſons.* Secondly, *That ſuch is the frame of man's mind, that the ſame truths may be differently apprehended and underſtood by different perſons.* And if this be true, then Traditional Doctrines, if they be delivered by ſpeech and words, will be liable to uncertainties and ambiguities as to their ſenſe, as well as Scripture. Mr. *Creſſy* * tells us, *That Reaſon and Experience ſhew, that differences will ariſe even about the Writings of the Fathers, and any thing but the Teſtimony of the preſent Church.* If this be true, Tradition wholly falls into uncertainty. For if difference will ariſe about *the Writings of the Fathers,* how they are to be interpreted, I ſuppoſe the Writings of Councils will be liable to the ſame inconvenience: And if the whole preſent Church cannot declare her ſenſe of any Traditional Doctrine otherwiſe than by a Council, (unleſs with the Jeſuites they will epitomize the Church into the Pope,) and the Decrees of a Council cannot be univerſally diſpers'd (or at leaſt never uſe to be) but by Writing: And if Differences will ariſe about the interpretation of *that Writing,* as well as any other; then this *preſent infallible Authority* (which Mr. *Creſſy* magnifies ſo much for ending Differences) leaves all Controverſies ariſing about the ſenſe of Tradition, as indeterminable as ever; and they muſt for ever remain ſo, till general Councils have got the knack of penning their Decrees in words which will ſo infallibly expreſs their meaning to the moſt captious Caviller, that no difference can poſſibly ariſe about the interpretation of them; or elſe (which will be more ſutable to this wiſe *Hypotheſis*) till general Councils (being convinc'd by Mr. *S's Demonſtrations*) ſhall come to underſtand themſelves ſo well, as not to entruſt their Decrees any more to the *uncertain* way of *Writing,* but for the future to communicate them to the World by the *infallible* way of *oral Tradition.* And to mention no more, Mr. *Knott* *, (who agrees with the other thus far, that the certain ſenſe of Scripture is onely to be had from the Church) ſpeaks to this purpoſe, That before we can be certain that this is the true ſenſe of ſuch a Text, we muſt either be certain that this Text is capable of no other ſenſe, as *Figurative, Myſtical,* or *Moral*; or if it be, we muſt have *ſome certain and infallible means to know in which of them it is taken, which can be known onely by revelation.* If this be true, then by a fair parity of reaſon, before I can be certain that this is the ſenſe of a Doctrinal Tradition delivered down to me, I muſt either be certain that the words, in which this Tradition was expreſſed when it was delivered to me, are capable of no other ſenſe (as Figurative, Myſtical, or Moral) beſides that in which I underſtood them; or if they be (as certainly they will be) capable of any of theſe other ſenſes, then muſt I have ſome certain and infallible means whereby to know in which of theſe they are taken: And this can no more be known without a revelation, than which is the true ſenſe of ſuch a Text

* Dial. 2. Sect. 6.

* Analyſ. Fidei. L. 1. c. 9.

* Append. c. 6.

* Anſwer to *Chilling.* c. 2. Sect. 6.

of Scripture. If it be ſaid, that the ſenſe of a Traditional Doctrine may by different expreſſions be ſtill farther and farther explained to me till I come certainly to underſtand the ſenſe of it; this will not help the matter: For if theſe kinds of cavils be good, that a man cannot be certain of the meaning of any words, till he can by an infallible argument demonſtrate either that they cannot be taken, or that they are not taken in any other ſenſe; I ſay, if this cavil will hold then every new expreſſion whereby any one ſhall endeavour to explain any Traditional Doctrine, is liable to the ſame inconvenience which thoſe words in which it was firſt delivered to me were liable to. From all which is evident, that the Traditionary Church can be no more certain of the ſenſe of their Traditional Doctrines, than Proteſtants may be of the ſenſe of Scripture.

§. 12. Theſe are his Exceptions contained in his ſecond *Diſcourſe*; and of what force they are, hath been examined. But becauſe he foreſaw that it might be replied that theſe defects might in part be provided aganſt *by Hiſtory, by the Providence of God, by Teſtimonies of Councils and Fathers, and by the ſufficient clearneſs of Scripture as to Fundamentals; He* endeavours to ſhew that theſe ſignifie little to this purpoſe.

* P. 17, 18. *Firſt* Not *Hiſtory* *; *becauſe few are skilled in Hiſtory, and they that are not, cannot ſafely rely upon thoſe that are skill'd unleſs they knew certainly that the Hiſtorians whom they rely on had ſecure grounds, and not bare hear-ſay for what they writ, and that they were not contradicted by others either extant, or periſhed.* How much credit is to be given to uncontrolled Hiſtory by the learned, and how much by the vulgar to men of skill, I have already ſhewn. I ſhall onely add now, that if this reaſoning be true, it is impoſſible for any man to be certain by Hiſtory of any ancient matter of Fact, as *namely* that there were ſuch perſons as *Julius Cæſar*, and *William the Conquerour*, and that they invaded and conquered *England*, becauſe (according to him) we cannot know certainly that the Hiſtorians, who relate theſe things, and upon whoſe authority we rely, *had ſecure grounds, and not bare hear-ſay for what they writ: And that they were not contradicted by others either extant or periſhed*, is, I am ſure, impoſſible for any man to know; For who can tell now what was contained in thoſe Books which are periſhed? So that if this be requiſite to make every Hiſtorical Relation credible, to know certainly that it was not contradicted by any of thoſe Books which we do not know what they were, nor what was in them, we can have no certainty of any ancient Fact or Hiſtory; for who knows certainly that ſome Books that are periſhed did not contradict whatever is written in Books that are extant? Nay, if this reaſoning hold, we can have no certainty of any thing conveyed by oral Tradition. For what though the Prieſt tell me this was the Doctrine of Chriſt delivered to him? unleſs I know that all others agree with him in this Tradition, I cannot rely upon his teſtimony: Nor then neither in Mr. *Knott's* * opinion, becauſe *the teſtimony of Preachers or Paſtours is humane and fallible*; unleſs (according to his *Jargon*) a *concluſion*, deduced from *Premiſſes* one of which is only *probable, and may be ſufficient to bring our underſtanding to an infallible act of Faith*, viz. *if ſuch a concluſion be taken Specificative*; whereas, if it be taken *Riduplicative, as it is a concluſion, it can onely beget a probable aſſent*; which is to ſay, that conſidered barely as a concluſion, and ſo far as in reaſon it can deſerve aſſent, it is onely probable; but conſidered as it ſerves an *Hypotheſis*, and is convenient to be believed with reaſon or without, ſo it is infallible. But to carry the ſuppoſition farther, put the caſe, that the whole preſent Age aſſembled in a general

* Anſw. to Chilling. c. 1. Sect. 33.

neral Council, ſhould declare that ſuch a Point was delivered to them: yet (according to Mr. *S.*) we cannot ſafely rely upon this, unleſs we knew certainly, that thoſe whom they relied on *had ſecure grounds, and not bare hearſay for what they delivered, and that they were not contradicted* within the ſpace of 1500 years *by any of thoſe that are dead*; which it is impoſſible for any one now to know.

But to ſhew how inconſiſtent he is with himſelf in theſe matters, I will preſent the Reader with *a paſſage* or *two* in another part of his Book; where he endeavours to prove that men may ſafely rely on a general and uncontrolled Tradition. He tells us *, *that the common courſe of humane converſation makes a madneſs not to believe great multitude of knowers, if no poſſible conſiderations can awaken in our reaſon a doubt that they conſpire to deceive us.* And a little after *, *Nor can any, unleſs their brains rove wildly, or be unſettled even to the degree of madneſs, ſuſpect deceit where ſuch multitudes agree unanimouſly in a matter of Fact.* Now if men be but ſuppoſed to write, as well as to ſpeak, what they know, and to agree in their Writings about matter of Fact; then it will be the ſame *madneſs not to believe multitudes* of Hiſtorians, *where no poſſible conſideration can awaken in our reaſon a doubt that they have conſpired to deceive us; and mens brains muſt rove wildly and be unſetled even to the degree of phrenzy, who ſuſpect deceit where ſuch multitudes unanimouſly agree in a matter of Fact.* And this ſeems to me to be the great unhappineſs of Mr. *S*'s Demonſtrations, that they proceed upon contradictory Principles; ſo that in order to the demonſtrating of the uncertainty of Books and Writings, he muſt ſuppoſe all thoſe Principles to be uncertain, which he takes to be ſelf-evident and unqueſtionable when he is to demonſtrate the Infallibility of Oral Tradition.

* P. 49.

Ibid.

§. 13. *Secondly*, He tells us *, the *Providence of God* is no ſecurity againſt thoſe contingencies the Scripture are ſubject to; becauſe we cannot be certain of Divine Providence or aſſiſtance to his Church, *but by Letter of Scripture*; therefore that muſt firſt be proved *certain, before we mention the Church, or God's aſſiſtance to her.* As if we pretended there were any promiſe in Scripture that God would preſerve the letter of it entire and uncorrupted, or as if we could not otherwiſe be aſſured of it; as if the light of natural Reaſon could not aſſure us of God's providence in general, and of his more eſpecial care of thoſe things which are of greateſt concernment to us, ſuch as this is, That a Book containing the method and the terms of ſalvation ſhould be preſerved from any material corruption. He might as well have ſaid, That without the Letter of Scripture we cannot know that there is a God.

* P. 18.

§. 14. *Thirdly*, Nor (ſays he *) can Teſtimonies of *Councils and Fathers* be ſufficient Interpreters of Scripture. We do not ſay they are. Our Principle is, that the Scripture doth ſufficiently interpret it ſelf, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things neceſſary to be believed and practiſed. And the general conſent of Fathers in this doctrine of the ſufficient plainneſs of Scripture (which I ſhall afterwards ſhew) is a good evidence againſt them. As for obſcure and more doubtful Texts, we acknowledge the Comments of the *Fathers* to be a good help, but no certain Rule of interpretation. And that the Papiſts think ſo, as well as we, is plain; inaſmuch as they acknowledge the Fathers to differ among themſelves in the interpretation of ſeveral Texts: And nothing is more familiar in all Popiſh Commentators, than to differ from the antient Fathers about the ſenſe of Scripture. And as for *Councils*, Dr. *Holden*, and Mr. *Creſſy* (as I

* P. 18, 19.

ſaid before) do not think it neceſſary to believe that always to be the true ſenſe of Texts which Councils give of them, when they bring them to confirm Points of Faith. Nay, if any Controverſie ariſe about the ſenſe of any Text of Scripture, it is impoſſible (according to Mr. *Ruſhworth's* Principles) for a Council to decide either that, or any other Controverſie, for *he* * makes it his buſineſs to prove, That Controverſies cannot be *decided by words*; and if this be ſo, then they cannot be decided at all, unleſs he can prove that they may be decided *without words*, and conſequently that Councils may do their work beſt in the *Quakers* way, by *ſilent Meetings*.

* Dial. 1. Sect. 8.

§. 15. *Fourthly*, Nor can (ſays he *) the *clearneſs of Scripture as to Fundamentals*, be any help againſt theſe defects. why not?

* P. 20, 21.

Firſt, Becauſe *a certain Catalogue of Fundamentals, was never given and agreed to by ſufficient Authority, and yet without this all goes to wrack.* I hope not, ſo long as we are ſure that God would make nothing neceſſary to be believed but what he hath made plain; and ſo long as men do believe all things that are plainly revealed (which is every one's fault if he do not) men may do well enough without a preciſe Catalogue. But ſuppoſe we ſay, that the Articles of the Apoſtles Creed contain all neceſſary matters of ſimple belief, what hath Mr. *S.* to ſay againſt this? I am ſure the *Roman Catechiſm*, ſet forth by the Decree of the *Council of Trent*, ſays * as much as this comes to, *viz. That the Apoſtles having received a command to preach the Goſpel to every creature, thought fit to compoſe a form of Chriſtian Faith, namely to this end, that they might all think and ſpeak the ſame things, and that there might be no Schiſms among thoſe whom they had called to the unity of Faith, but that they might all be perfect in the ſame ſenſe, and the ſame opinion: And this Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith and Hope, ſo fram'd by them, the Apoſtles called the Symbol or Creed.* Now how this end, of bringing men to unity of Faith, and making them perfectly of the ſame ſenſe and opinion, could probably be attained by means of the Creed, if it did not contain all neceſſary Points of ſimple belief, I can by no means underſtand. Beſides, a certain catalogue of Fundamentals is as neceſſary for them as for us; and when Mr. *S.* gives in his, ours is ready. Mr. *Chillingworth* had a great deſire to have ſeen Mr. *Knott's* catalogue of Fundamentals, and challenged him to produce it, and offered him very fairly, that when ever he might with one hand receive his, he would with the other deliver his own: But Mr. *Knott*, though he ſtill perſiſted in the ſame demand, could never be prevailed with to bring forth his own, but kept it for a ſecret to his dying day. But to put a final ſtop to this *Canting demand of a catalogue of Fundamentals* (which yet I perceive I ſhall never be able to do, becauſe it is one of thoſe expletive Topicks which Popiſh Writers, eſpecially thoſe of the loweſt Form, do generally make uſe of to help out a Book) however to do what I can towards the ſtopping of it, I deſire Mr. *S*, to anſwer the reaſons whereby his friend Dr. *Holden* * ſhews the unreaſonableneſs of this demand, and likewiſe endeavours to prove that ſuch a *Catalogue* would not onely be *uſeleſs* and *pernicious* if it could be given, but that it is *manifeſtly impoſſible* to give ſuch a preciſe Catalogue.

* Præfat.

* Analyſ. Fid. L. 1. c. 4.

Secondly, He asks *, *Is it a Fundamental that Chriſt is God?* If ſo, *Whether this be clear in Scripture, than that God hath hands, feet, &c.* To which I anſwer by another queſtion; Is it clear that there are Figures in Scripture, and that many things are ſpoken after the manner of men, and by way of condeſcenſion and accommodation to our capacities; and that cuſtom and common ſenſe teacheth men to diſtinguiſh between things

* P. 12.

things figuratively and properly ſpoken? If ſo, why cannot every one eaſily underſtand, that when the Scripture ſaith *God hath hands and feet*, and that *Chriſt is the Vine* and *the Door*, theſe are not to be taken properly, as we take this Propoſition, that Chriſt is God, in which no man hath any reaſon to ſuſpect a Figure? When Mr. *S.* tells us, That *he percheth upon the ſpecifical nature of things*, would it not offend him, if any one ſhould be ſo ſilly as to conclude from hence that Mr. *S.* believed *himſelf* to be a *Bird*, and *nature* a *Perch*? And yet not onely the Scriptures, but all ſober Writers are free from ſuch forc't and phantaſtical Metaphors. I remember that *Origen* * taxeth *Celſus* his wilful Ignorance in finding “ fault with the Scriptures, for attributing to God humane affections, as “ anger, &c. and tells him, that any one who had a mind to underſtand “ the Scriptures, might eaſily ſee, that ſuch expreſſions were accommo-“ dated to *us*, and accordingly to be underſtood; and that no man, that “ will but compare theſe expreſſions with other paſſages of Scripture, “ need to fail of the true ſenſe of them. But (according to Mr. *S.*) *Origen* was to blame to find fault with *Celſus* for thinking that the Scripture did really attribute humane affections to God; for how could he think otherwiſe, when *the moſt fundamental Point is not clearer in Scripture, than that God hath hands, feet, &c.* How could *Origen* in reaſon expect from *Celſus* (though never ſo great a Philoſopher) that he ſhould be able without the help of Oral Tradition, to diſtinguiſh between what is ſpoken *literally*, and what by a certain *Scheme* of ſpeech? *Theodoret* * tells us of one *Audæus*, who held that God had a humane ſhape, and bodily members; but *he* does not ſay that the reaſon of this Errour was, becauſe he made Scripture the Rule of his Faith, but expreſly becauſe *he was a fool, and did fooliſhly underſtand thoſe things which the Divine Scriptures ſpeak by way of Condeſcenſion.* So that although Mr. *S.* is pleas'd to make this wiſe Objection, yet it ſeems, (according to *Theodoret*) that men do not miſtake ſuch Texts, either for want of oral Tradition, or of ſufficient clearneſs in the Scriptures, but for want of common reaſon and ſenſe. And if Mr. *S.* know of any Rule of Faith that is ſecure from all poſſibility of being miſtaken by fooliſh and perverſe men, I would be glad to be acquainted with it, and with him for its ſake.

* L. 4.

* Hæret. Fab. l. 4.

SECT. IV.

That Scripture is a ſufficient Rule to the Unlearned, and to the moſt Rational doubters.

§. 1. IN his next Diſcourſe he endeavours to ſhew, that unlearned Perſons cannot be juſtified as acting rationally in receiving the Scripture for the Word of God, and relying upon it as a certain Rule; becauſe they are not capable of ſatisfaction concerning theſe matters. But I have already ſhewn that they are, and ſhall not repeat the ſame over again. And whereas he ſays *, That *ſeveral Profeſſions all pretend to Scripture*, and yet *differ*, and *damn*, and *perſecute one another* about theſe differences; the anſwer is eaſie: That they all pretend to Scripture, is an argument that they all acknowledge it to be the Word of God, and *the Rule of Faith*: and that they are generally agreed about the ſenſe of thoſe plain Texts which contain the fundamental Points of Faith is evident in that thoſe ſeveral Profeſſions acknowledge the Articles contained in the Apoſtles Creed to be ſufficiently delivered in Scripture: And if any Profeſſions differ about the meaning of plain Texts, that is not an argument that plain Texts are obſcure, but that ſome men are perverſe. And if thoſe

* P. 24.

Profeſſions damn and perſecute one another about the meaning of obſcure Texts, the Scripture is not in fault, but thoſe that do ſo.

* P.25,26,27.

§. 2. And whereas he pretends *, That the Scripture is not *able to ſatisfie Sceptical diſſenters, and Rational doubters, becauſe nothing under a demonſtration can ſatisfie ſuch perſons ſo well concerning the incorruptedneſs of Originals, the faithfulneſs of Tranſlations,* &c. *but that ſearching and ſincere Wits may ſtill maintain their ground of ſuſpence with A Might it not be otherwiſe?* This hath been anſwered already: partly, by ſhewing that the Scripture was not intended to ſatisfie Scepticks, and that a Demonſtration is not ſufficient to give ſatisfaction to them; and partly, by ſhewing that Rational doubters may have as much ſatisfaction concerning thoſe matters, as the nature of the things will bear; and he is not a Rational doubter that deſires more.

But that he may ſee the unreaſonableneſs of this Diſcourſe, I ſhall briefly ſhew him, That all mankind do in matters of this nature accept of ſuch evidence as falls ſhort of Demonſtration; and that his great *Friends* and *Maſters* from whom he hath taken the main grounds of his Book (though he manageth them to leſs advantage) do frequently acknowledge, that it is reaſonable for men to acquieſce in ſuch aſſurance as falls ſhort of Infallibility, and ſuch evidence as is leſs than Demonſtration. Do not mankind think themſelves ſufficiently aſſured of the Antiquity and Authors of ſeveral Books, for which they have not Demonſtrative evidence? Doth not *Ariſtotle* ſay, that things of a moral and civil nature, and matters of Facts done long ago, are incapable of Demonſtration; and that it is madneſs to expect it for things of this Nature? Are there no paſſages in Books ſo plain, that a man may be ſufficiently ſatisfied that this and no other is the certain ſenſe of them? If there be none can any thing be *ſpoken* in plainer words than it may be *written*? If it cannot, how can we be ſatisfied of the certain ſenſe of any Doctrine Orally delivered? And if we cannot be ſo ſatisfi'd, where's the certainty of Oral Tradition? But if Books may be written ſo plainly as that we may be abundantly ſatisfied that this is the certain ſenſe of ſuch and ſuch paſſages; then we may reaſonably reſt ſatisfied in evidence for theſe matters ſhort of Demonſtration. For was ever the ſenſe of any words ſo plain as that there did not remain *this ground of ſuſpence*, that thoſe words might be capable of another ſenſe? Mr. *Ruſhworth* * ſays, That *diſputative Scholars do find means daily to explicate the plaineſt words of an Authour to a quite different ſenſe:* And that the World might be furniſh't with an advantageous inſtance of the poſſibility of this *Raynaudus* * (a writer of there own) hath made a wanton experiment upon the Apoſtles Creed, and by a ſiniſter (but poſſible) interpretation, hath made every Article of it Hereſie and Blaſphemy, on purpoſe to ſhew that the plaineſt words are not free from ambiguity. But may be Mr, *S.* can out-do the Apoſtles, and can deliver the Chriſtian Doctrine ſo clearly, that he can demonſtrate it impoſſible for any man to put any other ſenſe upon any of his words than that which he intended. I do not know what may be done, but if Mr. *S.* doeth this, he muſt both mend his ſtyle, and his way of Demonſtration.

* Dial. 2. Sect. 7.

* De bonis & malis Libris.

Is Mr. *S.* ſufficiently aſſured that there is ſuch a part of the World as *America*? and can he demonſtrate this to any man, without carrying him thither? Can he ſhew by any neceſſary Argument, that it is naturally impoſſible that all the Relations concerning that place ſhould be falſe? When his Demonſtrations have done their utmoſt, cannot * *a ſearching and ſincere Wit at leaſt maintain of ſuſpence with A Might it not otherwiſe?*

* P. 27.

and with an, Is it not poſſible that all men may be Lyars, or that a company of Travellers may have made uſe of their Privilege to abuſe the World by falſe Reports, and to put a Trick upon mankind? or that all thoſe that pretend to go thither, and bring their Commodities from thence, may go to ſome other Parts of the World, and taking pleaſure in abuſing others, in the ſame manner as they have been impoſed upon themſelves, may ſay they have been at *America*? Who can tell but all this may be ſo? and yet I ſuppoſe, notwithſtanding the poſſibility of this, no man in his Wits is now poſſeſſed with ſo incredible a folly as to doubt whether there be ſuch a place. The caſe is the very ſame as to the certainty of an ancient Book and of the ſenſe of plain expreſſions: We have no demonſtration for theſe things, and we expect none; becauſe we know the things are not capable of it. We are not infallibly certain, that any Book is ſo ancient as it pretends to be, or that it was written by him whoſe name it bears, or that this is the ſenſe of ſuch paſſages in it; it is poſſible all this may be otherwiſe; *that is*, it implies no contradiction: But we are very well aſſured that it is not; nor hath any prudent man any juſt cauſe to make the leaſt doubt of it. For a bare poſſibility that a thing may be, or not be is no juſt cauſe of doubting whether a thing be or not. It is poſſible all the people in *France* may dye this night, but I hope the poſſibility of this doth not incline any man in the leaſt to think it will be ſo. It is poſſible the Sun may not riſe to morrow morning, and yet for all this I ſuppoſe that no man hath the leaſt doubt but that it will.

§. 3. But becauſe this *Principle*, viz. *That in matters of Religion a man cannot be reaſonably ſatisfy'd with any thing leſs than that infallible aſſurance which is wrought by Demonſtration*, is the main Pillar of Mr. *S*'s Book; therefore, beſide what hath been already ſaid to ſhew the unreaſonableneſs of this Principle, I ſhall take a little pains to manifeſt to him how much he is contradicted in this by the chief of *his Brethren of the Tradition*, *viz.* Mr. *Ruſhworth* Dr. *Holden*, Mr. *Creſſy*, and Mr. *White*, who beſides Mr. *S.* and one *I. B.* are (ſo far as I can learn) all the publick Patrons that ever this *Hypotheſis* of Oral Tradition hath had in the World; and if Mr. *White* (as I have reaſon to believe) was the Authour of thoſe *Dialogues* which paſs under *Ruſhworth*'s name, the number of them is yet leſs, Now if I can ſhew that this *Principle* (eſteem'd by Mr. *S.* ſo fundamental to this *Hypotheſis*) is plainly contradicted by the Principal *Aſſertors* of Oral Tradition, I ſhall hereby gain one of theſe to things; either that theſe great Patrons of Oral Tradition were ignorant of the true foundation of their own *Hipotheſis*, or that this *Principle* is not neceſſary for the ſupport of it. Not that I would be ſo underſtood as if I deny that theſe very *Perſons* do ſometimes ſpeak very big words of the neceſſity of Infallibility: But if it be there pleaſure to contradict themſelves, as I have no reaſon to be diſpleaſed, ſo neither to be concerned for it; but ſhall leave it to Mr. *S.* to reconcile *them* firſt to *themſelves* and then (if he pleaſes afterwards to *himſelf*.

§. 4. I begin with Mr. *Ruſhworth* of immortal memory, for that noble attempt of his to perſwade the World that notwithſtanding he was the firſt Inventer of this *Hypotheſis* of Oral Tradition, yet he could prove that the Church had in all Ages owned it, and proceeded upon it as her onely *Rule of Faith*. *He* in his *third Dialogue* *, when his *Nephew* objects to him, That *perhaps a Proteſtant would ſay that all* his foregoing Diſcourſe *was but Probability and likelihood, and therefore to hazard a mans Eſtate upon*

Sect. 3. & 4.

Perdventures, were ſomething hard, and not very rationally done: Replies thus to him, *What ſecurity do your Merchants, your States-men, your Souldiers, thoſe that go to Law, nay, even thoſe that Till your grounds and work for their livings, what ſecurity, I ſay, do all theſe go upon? Is it greater than the ſecurity which theſe grounds afford? ſurely no. And yet no man eſteems them fooliſh. All humane Affairs are hazardous, and have ſome adventure in them. And therefore who requires evident certainty only in matters of Religion, diſcovers in himſelf a leſs mind to the Goods promiſed in the next life, than to theſe which he ſeeks here in this World upon weaker aſſurance. Howſoever, the greateſt evidence that can be to him that is not capable of convincing Demonſtrations (which the greateſt part of Mankind fall ſhort of) is but conjectural.* So that (according to Mr. *Ruſhworth*) it is not reaſon and diſcretion, but want of love to God and Religion, which makes men require greater evidence for matters of Religion than for humane Affairs, which yet (he tells us) are *hazardous, and have ſome adventare in them,* and conſequently are not capable of Demonſtration. Beſides, if demonſtrative evidence be an eſſential Property of the *Rule of Faith* (as Mr. S. affirms) then this Rule cannot (according to Mr. *Ruſhworth*) be of any uſe to *the greateſt part of mankind* becauſe they are *not capable of convincing Demonſtrations.* Again, *Do but conſider* (ſays he *) *how unequal and unjuſt a condition it is, that the claim of the preſent Church ſhall not be heard, unleſs ſhe can confute all the peradventures that Wit may invent, and ſolve all the Arguments which the infinite variety of time, place, and occaſions may have given way unto; and then you will ſee how unreaſonable an Adverſary he is, who will not be content with any ſatisfaction, but ſuch as mans nature ſcarcely affords.* And is it not equally unjuſt in Mr. *S.* not to let Scripture's *claim be heard, unleſs we can confute* every *Peradventure* [and *might it not be otherwiſe*] *that Wit may invent?* See then *how unreaſonable an Adverſary* Mr. *S.* is, *who will not be content with any ſatisfaction, but ſuch as* (according to Mr. *Ruſhworth*) *mans nature ſcarcely affords.*

Dr. *Holden* (I confeſs) ſtates the matter ſomewhat cautiouſly, when he tells us * *That it ſhall ſuffice for preſent to determine, that the Wiſdom of the Creator hath afforded us ſuch an aſſurance, eſpecially of Truths neceſſary to Salvation, as is ſutable to our nature, and beſt fitted for the ſafe conduct of our lives in Moral and Religion Affairs:* But if we interpret theſe general expreſſions by the paſſages I before cited out of Mr. *Ruſhworth* (as in reaſon we may, ſince the *Doctor* is beholding to him for the beſt part of his Books) then nothing can make more againſt Mr. *S's Principle,*

§. 5. Mr. *Creſſy* in his *Exomologeſis* * ſays, *That ſuch Teachers, as approached neareſt to the fountain of Truth, Chriſt and his Apoſtles, had means of informing themſelves in Apoſtolical Tradition incomparably beyond us.* Mr. *S.* may do well to ſhew what thoſe means were which are ſo incomparably beyond his *Infallibility* and *Demonſtration.* The ſame *Author* * does very much applaud *Stapleton's* determination of the queſtion concerning the Churches Infallibility, which is as follows, *That the Church does not expect to be taught by God immediately by new Revelations, but makes uſe of ſeveral means;* &c. *as being govern'd not by Apoſtles,* &c. *but by ordinary Paſtors and Teachers. That theſe Paſtors in making uſe of theſe ſeveral means of Deciſion, proceed not as the Apoſtles did, with a peculiar infallible direction of the Holy Spirit, but with a prudential collection not always neceſſary. That to the Apoſtles who were the firſt Maſters of Evangelical Faith, and founders of the Church, ſuch an infallible certitude of means was neceſſary: not ſo now to the Church,* &c. If this be true, *That an infallible certitude*

* Ibid. Sect. 6.

* L. 1. c. 1.

* C. 19. Sect. 5.

* C 32. Sect. 4.

of means is not now neceſſary to the Church, and that her *Paſtors* do now in *deciding* matters of Faith proceed onely with a prudent collection not always neceſſary; then it ſhould ſeem that *a ſearching Wit may maintain his ground of ſuſpence*, even againſt their Church alſo, with *A might it not be otherwiſe*? Again Mr. *Creſſy* * tells us, That *truth and our obligation to believe it, is in an higher degree in Scripture, than in the Deciſions of the Church, as* Bellarmine *acknowledges*: which is to ſay, that we may have greater aſſurance of the truth of Doctrines contained in the Scriptures, than we can have of any Doctrine from the determination of the Church. But if we have the greateſt aſſurance that can be of Truths deliver'd to us by the Church, as Mr. *S.* affirms, then I would fain learn of him what that *higher degree* of aſſurance is which *Bellarmine* ſpeaks of, and whether it be greater than the greateſt? Not to inſiſt upon that (which yet I cannot but by the way take notice of) that Mr. *Creſſy*, by his approbation of this determination of *Bellarmine*'s, doth advance the Scripture above the Church as to one of the moſt eſſential Properties of the *Rule of Faith*, viz. the certainty of it.

* Append. c. 5.

But the moſt eminent Teſtimony to my purpoſe in Mr. *Creſſy* is that *famous paſſage* * (which hath given ſo much offence to ſeveral of his own Church) wherein he acknowledges the *unfortunateneſs (to him)* of the *word Infallibility*, and tells us, *That he could find no ſuch word in any Council*; *That no neceſſity appear'd to him that either he or any other Proteſtant ſhould ever have heard that word nam'd, and much leſs preſs'd with ſo much earneſtneſs as of late it has generally been in Diſputations and Books of Controverſie*; and that Mr. *Chillingworth combats this word with too great ſucceſs*, inſomuch that *if this word were once forgotten or but laid by*, Mr. *Chillingworths Arguments would loſe the greateſt part of their ſtrength*; and *that if this word were confin'd to the Schools where it was bred, there would be ſtill no inconvenience*: And *that ſince by manifeſt experience the Engliſh* Proteſtants *think themſelves ſo ſecure, when they have leave to ſtand or fall by that word, and in very deed have ſo much to ſay for themſelves when they are preſſed unneceſſarily with it*: *Since likewiſe it is a word capable of ſo high a ſenſe that we cannot deviſe one more full and proper to attribute to God himſelf*, &c. Since all this is ſo, he thinks he cannot be *blamed, if ſuch Reaſons move him to wiſh that the Proteſtants may never be invited to combat the Authority of the Church under that Notion*. A very ingenuous acknowledgment, and as croſs to Mr. *S's Principle* as any thing can be. But the word *Infallibility* was not ſo *unfortunate* to Mr *Creſſy*, as is untoward Explication of the fore-cited paſſage, in his *Appendix* which he afterwards publiſhed chiefly by way of Vindication of himſelf againſt the *Learned Author* of the *Preface* to my Lord *Falkland*'s Diſcourſe of *infallibility*. There he * tells us, That there are *ſeveral degrees of infallibility*. And that we may know what degrees of Infallibility he thinks neceſſary to be attributed to the Church, this following paſſage will inform us: *Methinks* (he ſays) *if God have furniſhed his divine and ſupernatural Truth, with evidence equal to this, the Sun will ſhine to morrow, or that there will be a Spring and Harveſt next year, we are infinitely obliged to bleſs his Providence, and juſtly condemned, if if we refuſe to believe the leaſt of ſuch Truths, as ſhewing leſs affection to ſave our ſouls, then the dull Plowmen to ſow their Corn, who certainly have far leſs evidence for their Harveſt, than Catholicks for their Faith*; and yet *they inſiſt not peeviſhly unto every capricious Objection, nor exact an infallible ſecurity of a plentiful reaping next Summer, but notwithſtanding all difficulties and contingencies proceed chearfully in their painful Husbandry*; So that according

* C. 40. Sect. 3, &c.

* Append. Sect. 2. & 3.

to this Diſcourſe, whatever degree of aſſurance the Church hath, or can give to thoſe who rely upon her, it is plain that no farther degree is neceſſary than what the Huſbandman, when he ſows, hath of a plentiful Harveſt; and that men are juſtly condemned if they refuſe to believe the leaſt truth upon ſuch ſecurity, which yet (by his own acknowledgment) is liable to Contingencies: Nay farther, that men are not reaſonable, but *peeviſh*, in *exacting infallible ſecurity*, and *inſiſting upon every capricious Objection*, ſuch as is Mr. *S's Might it not be otherwiſe?* Now as to this degree of Aſſurauce, or (as he calls it) Infallibility, I cannot but grant what he ſays of it to be moſt true, *viz.* That *in a ſevere acception of the word* it is not *rigorouſly infallible*, that is (as he explains it) it is not *abſolutely impoſſible*, nor does it *imply a flat contradiction* that the thing whereof we are ſo aſſured we may be otherwiſe: But then I utterlp deny that according to any true acception of this word, ſuch a degree of Aſſurance as he ſpeaks of can be called Infallibility; and withal I affirm, That none of thoſe ſeveral degrees of Infallibility which he mentions, excepting that only which imports an abſolute impoſſibility, can with any tolerable propriety of ſpeech or regard to the true meaning and uſe of the word, have the name of infallibility given to them. For Infallibility can ſignifie nothing elſe but an utter impoſſibility that one ſhould be deceived in that matter as to which he is ſuppoſed to be infallible; and to ſay ſuch a thing is impoſſible, is to ſay that the exiſtence of it implies a flat contradiction. So that whoſoever aſſerts degrees of Infallibility, is obliged to ſhew that there are degrees of abſolute impoſſibilities, and of perfect contradictions, and he had need of a very ſharp and piercing wit that is to find out degrees where there neither are nor can be any. Indeed, in reſpect of the objects of knowledge, it is eaſie to conceive how Infallibility may be extended to more objects or fewer; but in reſpect of the degree of aſſurance (of which Mr. *Creſſy* ſpeaks) it is altogether unimaginable how any one can be more or leſs out of *all poſſibility* of being deceived in thoſe things wherein he is ſuppoſed to be infallible; for no one can be more removed from the poſſibility of being deceived, than he that is out of *all poſſibility* of being deceived, and whoſoever is leſs than this, is not infallible; becauſe he only is ſo, who is out of *all* poſſibility of being deceived in thoſe matters wherein he is ſuppoſed to be infallible. So that Mr. *Creſſy*'s lower deprees of Infallibility are no degrees of that aſſurance which may properly be called infallible (for that can have no degrees) Put of that aſſrance which is leſs than infallible. And he needed not have raiſed all this duſt about the degrees of infallibility, had it not been that by the means of ſuch a Cloud he might make the more convenient eſcape out of that ſtrait he was in between the clamours of his own Church, and the advantage which his Adverſaries made of his free and open diſcourſe againſt Infallibility. For any one that carefully reads his Book, will find that he underſtands nothing by the Infallibility of the Church, but *an Authority of obliging all Chriſtians to ſubmit to her Deciſions*, which is no more but what every Supreme Civil Judge hath in matters, *viz.* a power to determine thoſe Controverſies that lie before him as well as he *can* or *will*, and when that is done every one is bound to ſubmit to ſuch determinations; but yet for all this, no man ever dream't a Supreme Devil Judge to be *infallible* more than another man. I do not now diſpute the extent of the Churches Authority; but if ſhe have no other Infallibility but what a full Authority of deciſion does ſuppoſe, I am ſure ſhe hath none at all.

Ci

Before I leave Mr. *Creſſy*, I cannot but take notice how *unfortunate* and diſingenuous he is in explaining the meaning of theſe words of his own, *viz.* [*Againſt this word of Infallibility Mr.* Chillingworth's *Book eſpecially combats, and this with too too great ſucceſſ*] which in his *Appendix* * he interprets thus, *Succeſſ, I mean, not againſt the Church, but againſt his own Soul, and the Souls of his Fellow Engliſh Proteſtants*, &c. As if one that had wiſhed well to *Cæſar* ſhould have ſaid, *That* Pompey *had fought againſt him with too too great ſucceſſ*; and being afterwards challenged by *Cæſar's* Party, as having ſaid that *Pompey* had Conquered *Cæſar*, he ſhould explain himſelf thus, *Succeſs, I mean, not againſt* Cæſar, *but againſt his own life, and the lives of his followers.* Can any thing be finer than for any man to ſay that by *Pompey's ſucceſs* in fighting againſt *Cæſar*, he means that *Cæſar* had beaten *Pompey*? which is no more than if one ſhould take the liberty to interpret *white* by *black*.

* C. 5. Sect. 2.

§, 6. Mr. *White* doth moſt expreſly contradict this *Principle* of Mr. *S's* in theſe following paſſages. In his *Preface* to Mr. *Ruſhworth* he ſays, *That ſuch a certainty as makes the cauſe always work the ſame effect, though it take not away the abſolute poſſibility of working otherwiſe, ought abſolutely to be reckoned in the degree of true certainty*; and that thoſe *Authours* are *miſtaken* who *undervalue it.* So that it ſeems Mr. *S.* is miſtaken in affirming that a man cannot be certain of any thing ſo long as there is any poſſibility that it may be otherwiſe. In his *Anſwer* to my Lord *Falkland*, he ſays *, That in *Moral matters, and ſuch as are ſubject to humane action, we muſt expect ſuch aſſurance as humane actions bear. If for the government of your ſpiritual life you have as much as for the management of your natural and civil life, what can you expect more? Two or three witneſſes of men beyond exception will caſt a man out of not onely his lands, but life and all. He that among Merchants will not adventure, where there is a Hundred to one of gaining, will be accounted a ſilly Factor. And among Souldiers, he that will not fear danger where but one of a Hundred is ſlain, ſhall not eſcape the ſtain of Cowardize. What then ſhall we expect in Religion, but to ſee a main advantage on the one ſide which we may reſt our ſelves on? and for the reſt, remember we are men ſubject to chance and mutability, and thank God he hath given us that aſſurance in a ſupernatural way, which we are contented withal in our civil ventures and poſſeſſions, which nevertheleſſ God knoweth we often love better, and would hazard leſſ than the unknown good of the life to come.* Again *, *If God Almighty hath in all ſort and manners provided his Church that ſhe may enlighten every man in his way, that goeth the way of a man, then let every man conſider which is the fit way for himſelf, and what in other matters of that way he accounteth evidence. And if there be no intereſt in his Soul to make him loth to believe, what in another matter of the like nature he doth not ſtick at, or heavy to practiſe what he ſees clearly enough, I fear not his choice.* Once more directing a man in his ſearch after rational ſatisfaction in matters of Religion, he hath this paſſage; * *Beſides this, he muſt have this care; that he ſeek what the nature of the ſubject can yield, and not as thoſe Phyſicians, who when thay have promiſed no leſs than Immortality, can at laſt onely reach to ſome conſervation of health or youth in ſome ſmall degree: So I could wiſh the Author to well aſſure himſelf firſt, that there is poſſible an Infallibility, before he be too earneſt to be contented with nothing leſs; for what if humane nature ſhould not be capable of ſo great a good? Would he therefore think it fitting to live without any Religion, becauſe he could not get ſuch a one as himſelf deſired, though with more than a man's wiſh? Were it not rational to ſee, whether*

* P. 14, 15.

* P. 30.

* P. 45.

among Religions ſome one have not ſuch notable advantages over the reſt, as in reaſon it might ſeem humane nature might be contented withal? Let him caſt his account with the deareſt things he hath, his own or friends lives, his eſtate, his hope of poſterity, and ſee upon what terms of advantage he is ready to venall theſe; and then return to Religion, and ſee whether, if he do not venture his ſoul upon the like, it be truely reaſon, or ſome other not confeſſed motive, which withdraws him. For my own part, as I doubt not of an Infallibility, ſo I doubt not but ſetting that aſide, there be thoſe Excellencies found on the Catholick party, which may force a man to prefer it, and to venture all he hath upon it, before all other Religions and Sects in the World. Why then may not one who after long ſearching findeth no Infallibility, reſt himſelf on the like, ſuppoſing man's nature affords no better?

* Letter to his Anſwerer. p. 5.

Are not theſe fair Conceſſions, which the evidence and force of Truth have extorted from theſe Authours? So that it ſeems that *that* which Mr. *S.* calls * *a civil piece of Atheiſtry,* is advanced in moſt expreſs words by his beſt Friends, and therefore I hope *he* will (as he threatens me) *be ſmart* with them *in oppoſition to ſo damnable and fundamental an Errour.* And whenever he attempts this, I would entreat him to remember that he hath theſe two things to prove. *Firſt,* That no evidence, but demonſtration, can give a man ſufficient aſſurance of any thing. *Secondly,* That a bare poſſibility that a thing may be otherwiſe, is a rational cauſe of doubting, and a wiſe ground of ſuſpence: which when he hath proved, I ſhall not grudge him his Infallibility

SECT. V.

That Scripture is ſufficient to convince the moſt acute Adverſaries: and that it is ſufficiently certain

* P. 28.

* P. 31.

* P. 31.

P. 116.

§. 1. THE laſt part of this *Third Diſcourſe* endeavours to ſhew *that the Scripture is not convictive of the moſt obſtinate and acute Adverſaries.* As for the *obſtinate,* he knows my mind already. Let us ſee why *the moſt acute Adverſary* may not be convinced by Scripture. Becauſe as *he* objects *, *Firſt,* We cannot be certain that this *Book is God's Word,* becauſe the *many ſtrange Abſurdities and Hereſies in the open letter as it lies; as that God hath hands and feet* &c. and becauſe *of the contradiction in it:* To which I have already returned an anſwer. *Secondly,* Becauſe (as he ſaith *) we cannot be *certain of the Truth of the letter in any particular Text, that was not foiſted in, or ſome way altered in its ſignificativeneſs; and if it be a negative propoſition, that the particle* [*not*] *was not inſerted, if affirmative, not left out.* And if we pretend to be certain of this he *demands* * *our demonſtration for it.* But how unreaſonable this *demand* is, I hope I have ſufficiently ſhewn. And to ſhew it yet farther, I aſk him, How their Church knows, that the particle [*not*] was not left out of any Text in which it is now found in their Copies? I know he hath a ready anſwer, *viz.* by Oral Tradition. But this (according to him *) onely reaches to *Scriptures letter ſo far as it is coincident with the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine;* concerning the reſt of Scripture it is impoſſible (according to his own principles) that they ſhould have any ſecurity that the particle [*not*] was not unduly inſerted, or left out by the Tranſcribers, Nay, as to thoſe Texts of Scripture which fall in with the main body of Chriſtian Doctrine, I demand his demonſtration that the particle [*not*] was not unduly inſerted or left out, not onely in thoſe Texts, but alſo in the Oral Tradition of the Doctrines coincident with the ſenſe of thoſe Texts. If he ſay; It was impoſſible any Age ſhould conſpire to leave out or inſert the particle [*not*] in the Oral Tradition; ſo ſay I it was that they ſhould conſpire to leave it out of the written Text: And then I differ from him thus far, That I do not think this naturally impoſſible, ſo as that it can rigorouſly be demonſtrated, but onely morally impoſſible ſo that no body hath any reaſon to doubt of it; which to a prudent man is as good as a demonſtration. *Pyrrho* himſelf never advanced any *Principle* of *ſepticiſm* beyond this, *viz.* That men ought to queſtion the credit of all Books, concerning which they cannot demonſtrate as to every ſentence in them, that the particle [*not*] was not inſerted (if it be affirmative) or left out (if it be negative.) If ſo much be required to free a man from reaſonable doubting concerning a Book, how happy are they that have attained to Infallibility? What he ſaith concerning the *Variæ Lectiones* * of Scripture, hath already had a ſufficient anſwer. * P. 32.

§.2. In his *Fourth Diſcourſe*, he endeavours to ſhew *, That the Scripture * P. 33. *is not certain in it ſelf*, and conſequently *not aſcertained to us.* Firſt, *Not certain, materially conſidered * as conſiſting of ſuch and ſuch Characters, be-* * P. 34, *cauſe Books are liable to be burnt, torn, blotted, worn out.* We grant, it is not impoſſible but that any, or all the Books in the World may be burnt: But then we ſay likewiſe, That a Book ſo univerſally diſperſed may eaſily be preſerved; though we have no aſſurance that God will preſerve it, in caſe all men ſhould be ſo fooliſh or ſo careleſs as to endeavour or ſuffer the abolition of it. But it ſeems the Scriptures cannot be a Rule of Faith if they be liable to any external accidents. And this (he tells us *) * P. 34. *Though it may ſeem a remote and impertinent Exception, yet to one who conſiders the wiſe diſpoſitions of Divine Providence, it will deſerve a deep conſideration; becauſe the ſalvation of Mankind being the end of God's making nature, the means to it ſhould be more ſetled, ſtrong, and unalterable, than any other piece of nature whatever.* But notwithſtanding this wiſe reaſon this *Exception* ſtill ſeems to me both *remote* and *impertinent.* For if this which he calls a Reaſon be a Truth, it will from thence neceſſarily follow, not onely that the Doctrine of Chriſt muſt be conveyed by ſuch a means as is more unaltered than the courſe of nature; but alſo by a clear parity of Reaſon, that all the means of our ſalvation do operate towards the accompliſhing of their end with greater certainty than the fire burns, or the Sun ſhines; which they can never do, unleſs they operate more neceſſarily than any natural cauſes; how they can do ſo upon voluntary Agents, I deſire Mr. *S.* to inform me.

§. 3. He proceeds by a long Harangue to ſhew *, That not onely theſe * P. 34. material Characters in themſelves are corruptible, but *in complexion with the cauſes, actually laid in the World to preſerve them entire; becauſe either thoſe cauſes are material, and then they are alſo liable to continual alterations; or ſpiritual, that is, the minds of men, and from theſe we may with good reaſon hope for a greater degree of conſtancy, than from any other piece of nature;* which by the way, is a very ſtrange Paradox, that the actions of voluntary Agents have a greater certainty and conſtancy in them, than thoſe of natural Agents; of which the fall of Angels and Men, compared with the continuance of the Sun and Stars in their firſt ſtate, is a very good evidence.

§. 4. But he adds a Caution *, *That they are perfectly unalterable from* * P. 35. *their nature, and unerrable, if due circumſtances be obſerved; that is, if the* *propoſals be made to beget certain knowledge, and due care uſed to attend to ſuch propoſals.* But who can warrant, That *due propoſals* will always be made to men, and *due care* uſed by them? If theſe be uncertain, where's the *conſtancy* and *unerrableneſs* he talks ſo much of? So that notwithſtanding the conſtancy of this *ſpiritual cauſe (the mind of man)* of preſerving Scriptures * P. 36. entire, yet in order to this (as he tells * us) *So many actions are to be done, which are compounded and made up of an innumerable multitude of ſeveral particularities to be obſerved, every of which may be miſtaken apart, each being a diſtinct little action in its ſingle ſelf, ſuch as the tranſcribing of a whole Book, conſiſting of ſuch Myriads of words, ſingle letters, and tittles or ſtops; and the ſeveral actions of writing over each of theſe ſo ſhort and curſory, that it prevents diligence, and exceeds humane care, to keep awake and apply* * Dial. 2. Sect. 7. *diſtinct attentions to every of theſe diſtinct actions.* Mr. *Ruſhworth* * much out-does Mr. *S.* in theſe minute Cavils, for he tells us, That *ſuppoſing an Original Copy of Chriſt's words, written by one of the Evangeliſts in the ſame language, let him have ſet down every word and ſyllable, yet men converſant in noting the changes of meanings in words will tell us, that divers accents in the pronunciation of them, the turning of the ſpeakers head or body this way or that way,* &c. *may ſo change the ſenſe of the words, that they will ſeem quite different in writing from what they were in ſpeaking.* I hope that Oral and Practical Tradition hath been careful to preſerve all theſe circumſtances, and hath deliver'd down Chriſt's Doctrine with all the right *Traditionary Accents, Nods* and *Geſtures* neceſſary for the underſtanding of it; otherwiſe the omiſſion of theſe may have ſo altered the ſenſe of it, that it may be now quite different from what it was at firſt. But to anſwer Mr. *S.* We do not pretend to be aſſured, that it is naturally impoſſible that the Scriptures ſhould have been corrupted or changed, but only to be ſufficiently aſſured that they have not received any material alteration, from as good Argumeuts as the nature of the ſubject will bear. But if his *Reaſon* had not been very *ſhort* and *curſory* he might eaſily have reflected, that *Oral Tradition* is equally liable to all theſe contingencies. For it doth as much *prevent diligence, and exceed humane care, to keep awake and apply diſtinct attentions to the diſtinct actions of ſpeaking, as of writing.* And I hope he will not deny, that a Doctrine *Orally delivered,* conſiſts of *words,* and *letters,* and *accents,* and *ſtops,* as well as a Doctrine *written*; and that the ſeveral actions of *ſpeaking,* are as *ſhort* and *curſory* as of *writing.*

* P. 38. §. 5. *Secondly,* He tells us *, *Scripture formerly conſidered as to its ſigni-*
* P. 38. *ficativeneſs, is alſo uncertain.* Firſt, * *Becauſe of the uncertainty of the letter.*
* P. 38. This is already anſwered. Secondly, * *Becauſe the certain ſenſe of it is not to be arrived to by the Vulgar, who are deſtitute of languages and Arts.* True, where men are not permitted to have the Scriptures in their own Language, and underſtand no other: But where they are allowed the Scriptures tranſlated into their own Language they may underſtand them, all neceſſary points of Faith and Practice being ſufficiently plain in any
* P. 38. Tranſlations of the Bible that I know of: And that * eminent Wits cannot agree about the ſenſe of Texts which concern the main points of Faith, hath been ſpoken to already.

§. 6. As for the Reverence he pretends to Scripture in the concluſion of his *Fourth Diſcourſe,* he might have ſpared that, after all the raillery and rudeneſs he hath uſed againſt it. It is eaſie to conjecture, both from his principles and his uncivil expreſſions concerning them, what his eſteem is of thoſe Sacred Oracles. Probably it was requiſite in prudence to caſt in a few good words concerning the Scriptures, for the ſake of the more tender and ſqueamiſh Novices of there Religion, or (as Mr. *Ruſhworth's Nephew* * ſays frankly and openly) *for the ſatisfaction of indifferent men, that have been brought up in this verbal and apparent reſpect of the Scripture,* who it ſeems are not yet attained to that degree of Catholick Piety and Fortitude as to endure patiently that the Word of God ſhould be reviled or ſlighted. Beſides that, in reference to thoſe whom they hope hereafter to convert (who might be too much alienated from their Religion, if he had expreſſed nothing but contempt towards a Book, which Proteſtants, and Chriſtians in all Ages till the very dregs of Popery, have been bred up to a high veneration of,) it was not much amiſs to paſs this formal compliment upon the Bible; which the wiſe of his own Religion will eaſily underſtand, and may ſerve to catch the reſt. But let him not deceive himſelf, *God is not mocked.*

* Dial. 2. Sect. 14.

SECT. VI.

§. 1. SEcondly, He comes to ſhew *, *That the Properties of a Rule of Faith belong to Oral Tradition.* And, *Firſt*, He gives a tedious explanation of the nature of this *Oral Practical Tradition*, which amounts to this; That as in reference to the civil Education of Children, *they taught their own and others names, to write and read, and exerciſe their Trades*: So in reference to Religion, the Children of Chriſtians *firſt hear ſounds, afterwards by degrees get dim notions of God, Chriſt, Saviour, Heaven, Hell, Vertue, Vice, and by degrees practiſe what they have heard; they are ſhewn to ſay Grace, and their Prayers, to hold up their hands, or perhaps eyes, and to kneel, and other poſtures.* Afterward they are acquainted with the *Creed, Ten Commandments, and Sacraments, ſome common Forms of Prayer, and other practices of Chriſtianity, and are directed to order their lives accordingly,* and are *guided* in all this *by the actions and carriage of the elder faithful*; and *this goes on by inſenſible degrees, not by leaps, from a Hundred years to a Hundred, but from Month to Month, and even leſs.* If this be all that Tradition doeth, this is nothing but what is done among Proteſtants, and that with greater advantage; becauſe we always teach Children to ſay their Prayers in a known Tongue ſo as they may underſtand them. And we alſo teach them the Creed, and Ten commandments, and the Sacraments, ſo many as Chriſt hath inſtituted and no more. So that if this be ſo infallible a way of conveying the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, we have it among us. And we do over and beſides, inſtruct them in the Scriptures, which are the authentick Inſtruments whereby Chriſt's Doctrine is conveyed to us. But when we do not ſuppoſe (as his *Hypotheſis* neceſſarily enforceth him to do) that the Chriſtian Doctrine is equally taught and learned by all; but by ſome more, by others leſs perfectly, according to the different abilities and diligence of Parents and Teachers, and the various capacities and diſpoſitions of Children; whereas his *Hypotheſis* falls, if all or at leaſt the generallity of Parents do not inſtruct their Children with the like exactneſs, and if the generality of Children do not receive this Doctrine in the ſame perfection that it is delivered. For if it be taught or received with any variation, it muſt neceſſarily be ſo conveyed, and theſe variations will grow daily. I had thought he would have told us, how all Parents do teach their Children the whole Body of Chriſt's Doctrine, and explain to them every

* P. 41.

That the Properties of a Rule of Faith do not belong to Oral Tradition.

part of it in a Hundred or a Thouſand ſeveral expreſſions ſignifying the ſame ſenſe, and not have inſtanced in two *Set-forms*, ſuch *as the Creed*, and *Ten Commandments*; for according to Mr. *White* *, *That cannot be a Tradition, which is delivered in ſet-words.*

* Apolog. P. 81.

§. 2. Having thus explained Oral Tradition, he comes to ſhew that the properties of a Rule of Faith agree to it. I have already ſhewed that the true Properties of a *Rule of Faith* are but *two*, viz. *That it be plain and intelligible, and that it be ſufficiently certain.* The *firſt* of theſe, that Oral Tradition may deliver a Doctrine plainly and intelligibly, I grant him. All the difficulty is about the *ſecond* Property, whether we have ſufficient aſſurance that the Doctrine delivered down by Oral Tradition hath received no corruption or change in its conveyance? And all that he pretends to prove in this *Diſcourſe* is, That if this Rule hath been followed and kept to all along, the Chriſtian Doctrine neither hath, nor can have received any change; that is, if the next Age after the Apoſtles did truely, and without any alteration deliver the Chriſtian Doctrine to their immediate Succeſſours, and they to theirs, and ſo on, then upon this ſuppoſition the Doctrine of the preſent Traditionary Church muſt be the very ſame with that which was delivered to the Apoſtles. All this is readily granted to him. But that this Rule hath always been followed, nay, that it is impoſſible there ſhould have been any deviation from it (as he pretends) this we deny, not onely as untrue, but as one of the moſt abſurd Propoſitions that ever yet pretended to demonſtrative evidence.

THE

THE
RULE
OF
FAITH.

PART III.

In which Mr. S's Demonſtrations and Corollaries are Examined.

SECT. I.

Conſiderations touching his Demonſtrations in general.

§. 1. BEfore I come to ſpeak particularly to his *Demonſtrations*, I ſhall premiſe theſe *two Conſiderations*. *Firſt*, That (according to the Principle of the Patrons of Tradition) no man can by his private Reaſon certainly find out the true *Rule of Faith*. *Secondly*, That (according to Mr. *S.*) the way of Demonſtration is no certain way to find out the *Rule of Faith*. If either of theſe be made out, his Demonſtrations loſe all their force. If the *firſt* be made good, then he cannot demonſtrate the Infallibility of Tradition, nor conſequently that *that* is the *Rule of Faith*. If the *ſecond*, then the way of Demonſtration which he pretends to take ſignifies nothing.

§. 2. *Firſt*, No man can (according to the principles of the Patrons of Tradition) by his private Reaſon certainly find out what is the *Rule of Faith*. Suppoſe a Heathen to be deſirous to inform himſelf of the Chriſtian Faith; in order to which he is inquiſitive after ſome Rule by which he may take a meaſure of it, and come certainly to know what it is: He enquires of Chriſtians what their Rule is, and finds them divided about it, ſome ſaying that the Scripture, others that Oral Tradition is the Rule. In this caſe it is not poſſible (without a Revelation) for this man to find out the *Rule of Faith*, but by his own private Reaſon examining and weighing the arguments and pretences of both ſides. And when he hath done this, unleſs he can by his Reaſon demonſtrate that the one is a certain and infallible Rule, and the other not ſo, he hath not (according to Mr. *S.*) found out the *Rule of Faith*. But Reaſon can never do this, according to Mr. *S.* For ſpeaking of demonſtrating

* P. 53. ing the certainty of Tradition, *he* tells us *, *That Tradition hath for its Baſis mans nature not according to his Intellectuals which do but darkly grope* * Append. 2d. p. 183. *in the purſuit of Science*, &c. And again *, ſpeaking how Reaſon brings men to the *Rule of Faith*, he uſes this compariſon, *She is like a dim-ſighted man, who uſed his Reaſon to find a truſty Friend to lead him in the twilight, and then relied on his guidance rationally without uſing his own Reaſon at all about the Way it ſelf.* So that (according to him) the certainty of Tradition cannot be founded on Demonſtration, becauſe it is not founded in the *intellectual* part of man, which only can demonſtrate. Beſides if it were founded in the intellectual part, yet that can never be able to demonſtrate the certainty of Tradition, becauſe that faculty which is *dim-ſighted*, and does but *grope darkly in the purſuit of Science*, is uncapable of framing Demonſtrations. Nor can any man underſtand how *dim-ſighted* Reaſon ſhould ſee clearly to chuſe its guide, any more than its way, eſpecially if it be conſidered what a pretty Contradiction it is, to ſay that Reaſon as it is *dim-ſighted* can *ſee clearly*.

But Mr. *Creſſy* is not contented to call every mans Reaſon *dim-ſighted* he ventures a ſtep farther, and calls it *hood-winkt* and *blind*: For he tells * Append. c. 6. Sect. 8. us *, *That private Reaſon is apparently a moſt fallible guide*; and he pities * * Ibid. Sect. 9. my Lord *Falkland's* caſe, becauſe in the ſearch of the true Religion he did *betake himſelf to the caſual conduct of blind, humane, natural Reaſon*, which * Ibid. Sect. 11. afterwards he calls * *a guide that two perſons cannot poſſibly follow together, becauſe no two perſons (that ever followed any other guide beſide Authority) did or could think all things to be reaſonable that all others thought ſo*; and by conſequence *ſuch a guide that as long as he continues in that office, there cannot poſſibly be any Church any where*: *which* (ſays he) *is an infallible eviction that this is an imaginary ſeducing guide, ſince it is impoſſible that ſhould be a guide appointed for thy Chriſtianity, which neither Chriſt nor his Apoſtles, nor any of their Followers ever mentioned, yea, which formally deſtroys one of our twelve Articles of the Apoſtles Creed*, viz. *I believe the Holy Catholick Church.* Thus he does by Reaſon *clearly and infallibly evince*, that Reaſon cannot be otherwiſe than a moſt *blind and fallible guide*, This it is to talk of things when a man looks only upon one ſide of them; as if becauſe Reaſon has *a blind ſide* and is uncertain in ſome things, therefore we ought to conclude *univerſally blind* and uncertain in every thing; and as if becauſe all men cannot think all things reaſonable which any one man thinks to be ſo, therefore it is to be doubted whether thoſe common Principles of Reaſon be true which Mankind are generally agreed in. And that Mr. *Creſſy* ſpeaks here of the uſe of our private Reaſon in the finding out of our Rule, is clear from what he ſays in the next *Section*, viz. *That this hood-wink't guide (enquiring into Scripture, and ſearching after Tradition) may poſſibly ſtumble upon the way to Unity and Truth, that is, the true Catholick Church.* If this be true, why does Mr. *S.* pretend that he can by Reaſon demonſtrate the Infallibility of Tradition, and by this *hood-wink't guide* lead men to the true *Rule of Faith*? And what a pitiful encouragement would this be to an inquiſitive Philoſopher (who knowing no other guide but his Reaſon, whereby to find out whether Scripture or Tradition be the Rule) to tell him that by the help of this *hood-wink't guide he might poſſibly ſtumble* upon the right?

A man may juſtly ſtand amazed at the inconſiſtency of theſe mens Diſcourſes, and Principles. In one *Mood* they are all for *Demonſtration*, and for convincing men *in the way of perfect Science* which is the true *Rule of Faith*: But then again when another *fit* takes them, there's no ſuch thing as Science, *humane Reaſon* grows all on the ſudden *dim-ſighted*; and at the next word is ſtruck *ſtark blind*; and then the very utmoſt that it can do towards the bringing of an unprejudiced and inquiſitive perſon to the true *Rule of Faith*, is to leave him in a *poſſibility of ſtumbling* upon it; but if he be a Heretick that makes uſe of private Reaſon for his guide, then * *it is impoſſible but that he with his blind guide ſhould fall into the Pit.* I cannot for my part imagine how they can reconcile the *blindneſs* of humane Reaſon with all that noiſe which they make about Science and Demonſtration; but this I muſt confeſs that theſe kind of Diſcourſes which I meet with in Mr. *S.* and Mr. *Creſſy*, are very proper Arguments to perſwade a man of the blindneſs of humane Reaſon. And indeed there is one paſſage in Mr. *Creſſy*, which gives me very great ſatisfaction concerning theſe matters, where he tells us *, That the *Wit and Judgment of Catholicks is to renounce their own Judgment, and depoſe their own Wit.* Now he that profeſſes to have done this may write Contradictions, and no body ought to challenge him for it. However, it is a very ingenuous acknowledgment, that when he forſook our Church and turned Papiſt, he laid aſide his Judgment and Wit; which is juſt ſuch an heroick act of Judgment, as if a man in a bravery to ſhew his liberty ſhould ſell himſelf for a ſlave. I am glad to underſtand from an experienced Perſon, what charges a man muſt be at when he turns *Roman Catholick*, namely, that whoever will embrace that Religion muſt forfeit his Reaſon.

* Append. c. 7. Sect. 8.

* Ibid.

§. 3. *Secondly*, The way of Demonſtration is (according to Mr. *S.*) no certain way to find out the *Rule of Faith*. In his 4th. *Appendix* * againſt my Lord of *Down*, one of the *Eight Mines* (as he calls them) which he *lays to blow up my Lords Diſſwaſive againſt Popery*, is this, *That the method he takes in diſſwading cannot be held in reaſon to have power to diſſwade, unleſs it be proper to that effect, that is, not common to that effect and a contrary one. Now, that being moſt evidently no method or way to ſuch an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect, 'tis plain to common ſenſe, that my Lord of* Down *miſcalls his Book a Diſſwaſive, and that it can have in it no power of moving the underſtanding one way or other, unleſs he can firſt vouch ſome particularity in the method he takes, above what's in others in which we experience miſcarriage*, &c. If this be true, then his *method* of Demonſtration is no *way* to make men certain of what he pretends to demonſtrate, becauſe that is *moſt evidently no way to an effect which many follow and take, yet arrive not at that effect*; ſo that *'tis plain to common ſenſe that* Mr. *S's* Demonſtrations *can have in them no power of moving the underſtanding one way or other, unleſs he can vouch ſome particularity* in the Demonſtrations he pretends to bring, *above what is* in other pretended Demonſtrations *in which we experience miſcarriage.* Do not *Thomas*, and *Scotus* (as Mr. *White* tells us *) all along pretend to demonſtrate? and yet it is generally believed that (at leaſt where they contradict one another) one of them failed in his Demonſtrations. Did not Mr. *Charles Thynne* pretend to have demonſtrated that a man at one jump might leap from *London* to *Rome*? and yet I do not think any one was ever ſatisfi'd with his Demonſtration. And Mr. *S.* knows one in the World (whom I will not name, becauſe he hath ſince ingenuouſly acknowledged his Errour) who thought he had demonſtrated the *Quadrature of the Circle*, and was ſo confident of it as to venture the Reputation of his Demonſtration in Divinity upon it, and ſome of thoſe Divinity Demonſtrations

* P. 253. & 254.

* Extaſis P. 24.

ons were the very ſame with Mr. *S*'s. Since therefore the World hath *experienced* ſo much *miſcarriages* in the way of Demonſtrations, before Mr. *S*'s Demonſtrations can be allowed to ſignifie any thing, *he muſt* (according to his own Law) *vouch ſome particularity* in his own *way* and *method* of Demonſtration above what is in other mens. He hath not any where (that I remember) told us what that *particularity* is, wherein his *way* of Demonſtration is above other mens: Nor can I upon the moſt diligent ſearch find any peculiar advantage that his *Way* has more than theirs above mentioned; unleſs this be one that he pretends to demonſtrate a ſelf-evident Principle, and herein I think he hath plainly the advantage of Mr. *Charles Thynne*; and unleſs this may be counted another advantage, that he has ſo extraordinary a confidence and conceit of his own Demonſtrations, and in this particular, I muſt acknowledge that he clearly excels all that have gone before him: In all other things, his way of Demonſtrations is but like his Neighbours.

SECT. II.

Mr. *S*'s demonſtration *a priori.*

§. 1. I Come now to examine his *Demonſtrations* of this *ſelf-evident Principle* (as he often calls it) that Oral Tradition is a certain and infallible way of conveying Chriſt's Doctrine from one Age to another, without any corruption or change; which is to ſay, that it is impoſſible but that this Rule ſhould always have been kept to. That this is not a *ſelf-evident Principle*, needs no other evidence than that he goes about to *demonſtrate* it. But yet, notwithſtanding this, I think he hath as much reaſon to call *this* a *ſelf-evident Principle*, as to call his *proofs* of it *Demonſtrations*.

* P. 59, 60.

§. 2. In order to his Demonſtration *a Priori*, he lays * theſe four *grounds*, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words. Firſt, *That Chriſtian Doctrine was at firſt unanimouſly ſettled by the Apoſtles, in the hearts of the faithful diſperſed in great multitudes over ſeveral parts of the World.* Secondly, *That this Doctrine was firmly believed by all thoſe faithful to be the way to Heaven, and the contradicting or deſerting it, to be the way to damnation: ſo that the greateſt hopes and fears imaginable were by engaging the Divine Authority ſtrongly applied to the minds of the firſt Believers, encouraging them to the adhering to that Doctrine, and deterring them from relinquiſhing it; and indeed infinitely greater than any other whatever, ſpringing from any temporal conſideration: and that this was in all Ages the perſwaſion of the faithful.* Thirdly, *That hopes of good and fear of harms ſtrongly applied are the cauſes of actual will.* Fourthly, *That the thing was feaſible or within their power; that what they were bred to was knowable by them. This put, it follows as certainly that a great number or body of the firſt Believers and after faithful in each Age, that is, from Age to Age would continue to hold themſelves and teach their Children as themſelves had been taught, that is, would follow and ſtick to Tradition, as it doth, that a cauſe put actually cauſing produceth its effect.* This is his *Demonſtration* with the *grounds* of it.

§. 3. To ſhew the vanity and weakneſs of this pretended *Demonſtration*, I ſhall aſſail it theſe *three* ways; by ſhewing, *Firſt*, That if the grounds of it were true they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impoſſible which common experience evinceth, and himſelf muſt grant to have been. *Secondly*, That his main grounds are apparently falſe, *Thirdly*, That his Demonſtration is confuted by clear and undeniable inſtances to the contrary.

SECT. III.

The *Firſt* anſwer to this Demonſtration.

§. 1. IF the grounds of it were true, they would conclude too much, and prove that to be impoſſible which common experience evinceth and himſelf muſt grant to have been. For if theſe two *Principles* be true, *That the greateſt hopes and fears are ſtrongly applied to the minds of all Chriſtians*; *and that thoſe hopes and fears ſtrongly applied are the cauſe of actual will to adhere conſtantly to Chriſt's Doctrine*: then from hence it follows that none that entertain this Doctrine can ever fall from it; becauſe falling from it is inconſiſtent with an actual will of adhering conſtantly to it. For ſuppoſing (as he doth) certain and conſtant cauſes of actual will to adhere to this Doctrine, thoſe who entertain it muſt actually will to adhere to it, becauſe *a cauſe put actually cauſing produceth its effect*, which is conſtant adherence to it. And if this were true theſe two things would be impoſſible. *Firſt*, That any Chriſtian ſhould turn Apoſtate or Heretick. *Secondly*, That any Chriſtian ſhould live wickedly. Both which not only frequent and undoubted experience doth evince, but himſelf muſt grant, *de facto* to have been.

§. 2. *Firſt*, It would be impoſſible that any Chriſtian ſhould turn *Apoſtate* or *Heretick*. *Hereſie* according to him is nothing elſe but the *renouncing of Tradition*. Now he tells us *, *That the firſt Renouncers of Tradition muſt have been true Believers or holders of it e'er they renounced it*; and * P. 60. I ſuppoſe there is the ſame reaſon for *Apoſtates*. But if all Chriſtians are true Believers (as he calls them) have theſe Arguments of hope and fear ſtrongly applied; and hope and fear ſtrongly applied be the cauſes of actual will to adhere to this Doctrine; 'tis neceſſary all Chriſtians ſhould adhere to it, and impoſſible there ſhould be either Apoſtates or Hereticks. For if theſe cauſes be put in *all the faithful actually cauſing* (as the Grounds of his Demoſtration ſuppoſe) an *indefectibleneſs* be *the proper and neceſſary effect of theſe cauſes*, as he alſo ſaith * then it is impoſſible that * P. 75. where theſe cauſes are put, there ſhould be any defection. For a proper and neceſſary effect cannot but be where the cauſes of ſuch an effect are put; eſpecially if they be put actually cauſing; and conſequently 'tis impoſſible that any ſingle Chriſtian ſhould ever either totally Apoſtatize or fall into Hereſie, *that is*, renounce Tradition.

§. 3. And that this is a genuine conſequence from theſe Principles (though he will not acknowledge it here, becauſe he ſaw it would ruine his Demonſtration) is liberally acknowledged by him in other parts of his Diſcourſe. For he tells us *, *That it exceeds all the power of nature (ab-* * P. 54. *ſtracting from the cauſes of madneſs and voilent diſeaſe) to blot the knowledge of this Doctrine out of the ſoul of one ſingle Believer*, and * that *ſince no man* * P. 78. *can hold contrary to his knowledge, nor doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing it doth ſo, it is a manifeſt impoſſibility a whole Age ſhould fall into an abſurdity ſo inconſiſtent with the nature of one ſingle man.* And *, That *it is perhaps impoſſible for one ſingle man to attempt to deceive* * P: 83. *poſterity* by renouncing Tradition. Which paſſages laid together amount to thus much, That it is impoſſible that Tradition ſhould fail in any one ſingle perſon. And though in the paſſage laſt cited he ſpeak faintly, and with a *perhaps*, as if he apprehended ſome danger in ſpeaking too peremptorily, yet any one would eaſily ſee the *laſt* to be as impoſſible as any of the reſt. And he himſelf elſewhere, being in the full Career of his Bombaſt Rhetorick, delivers it roundly without fear or wit *, *Sooner may the ſinews of entire nature by overſtraining crack, and ſhe loſe all her activity and motion, that is, her ſelf, than one ſingle part of that innumerable multitude which integrate that vaſt teſtification which we call Tradition can poſſibly be violated.*

§. 4. But it may be we deal too hardly with him and preſs his Demonſtration too far, becauſe he tells us he only intends by it to prove that the generality of Chriſtians will always adhere to Tradition. But if he intended to prove no more but this, he ſhould then have brought a Demonſtration that would have concluded no more; but this concludes of all as well as of the generallity of Chriſtians: A clear evidence that it is no Demonſtration, becauſe it concludes that which is evidently falſe, That there can be no Apoſtates or Hereticks. Beſides, ſuppoſing his Demonſtration to conclude onely that the generality of Chriſtians would always adhere to Tradition, this is as plainly confuted by experience, if there be any credit to be given to Hiſtory. St. *Hierom* tell us *, That *Liberius* Biſhop of *Rome* (for all *his particular Title to infallibility built upon Tradition*, as Mr. *S.* ſpeaks *Coroll. 28.*) *turned Arian.* And that * *Arianiſm was eſtabliſh'd by the Synod of Ariminum*, which was a Council more general than that of *Trent*. And that * *almoſt all the Churches in the whole World under the names of Peace and of the Emperour, were polluted by Communion with the Arians.* Again, That * *under the Emperour* Conſtantius (Euſebius *and* Hippatius *being Conſuls*) *Infidelity was ſubſcribed under the names of Unity and Faith.* And * *that the whole World groaned and wondered to ſee it ſelf turned Arian.* And *he* * uſes this as an argument to the *Luciferians*, to receive into the Church thoſe who had been defiled with the Hereſie of *Arius* becauſe the number of thoſe who had kept themſelves Orthodox, was exceeding ſmall: *For* (ſays he) *the Synod of* Nice *which conſiſted of above Three hundred Biſhops, received Eight Arian Biſhops whom they might have caſt out without any great loſs to the Church; I wonder then how ſome, and thoſe the followers of the Nicene Faith can think that three Confeſſors* (*viz.* Athanaſius, Hilarius, Euſebius) *ought not to do that in caſe of neceſſity for the good and ſafety of the whole World, which ſo many and ſuch excellent Perſons did voluntarily.* It ſeems *Arianiſm* had prevailed very far, when St. *Hierom* could not name above three eminent Perſons in the Church who had preſerved themſelves untainted with it. Again *, Arius *in* Alexandria *was at firſt but one ſpark, but becauſe it was not preſently extinguiſh'd it broke out into a flame which devoured the whole World. Gregory Nazianzen* * likewiſe tells us to the ſame purpoſe, That *the Arian Hereſie ſeized upon the greateſt part of the Church.* And, to ſhew that he knew nothing of Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration of the indefectibility of the generality of Chriſtians, he asks *, *where are thoſe that define the Church by multitude, and deſpiſe the little Flock*, &c? And this Hereſie was of a long continuance, for from its firſt riſe which happened in the 20*th* year of *Conſtantine*, it continued (as *Joh. Abbas* * hath calculated it) 266. years. And the *Pelagian* Hereſie (if we may believe *Bradwardine*, one of the great Champions of the Church againſt it) did in a manner prevail as much as *Arianiſm*, as the ſaid *Authour* complains in his *Preface* to his *Book* *, That *almoſt the whole World was run after* Pelagius *into Errour.* Will Mr. *S.* now ſay, that in the

* P. 54.

* Chron. ad Annum Chriſt. 352.

* Ad. An. 363.

* Ad. An. 364.

* Adverſ. Lucifer.

* Ibid.

* Ibid.

* In Epiſt. ad Galat. l. 3.

* Orat. 20, & 21.

* Orat. 25.

* Chron. ad Annum octavum Maurit.

* Cauſ. Dei.

the height of theſe Hereſies *the generality of Chriſtians did firmly adhere to Tradition*? If he ſay they did, let him anſwer the expreſs *Teſtimonies* produced to the contrary: But if they did not, then his Demonſtration alſo fails as to the *generality of Chriſtians.* And if the greater part of Chriſtians may fall off from Tradition, what Demonſtration can make it impoſſible for the leſſer to do ſo? Who will ſay it is in Reaſon impoſſible that a *Thouſand* perſons ſhould relinquiſh Tradition, though *Nine hundred* of them have already done it, and though the remainder be no otherwiſe ſecured from doing ſo than thoſe were who have actually relinquiſh'd it? Now is not this a clear evidence that this which he calls a Demonſtration *à Priori*, is no ſuch thing? Becauſe every Demonſtration *à Priori*, muſt be from cauſes which are *neceſſary*, whereas his Demonſtration is from *voluntary* cauſes. So that unleſs he can prove that *voluntary* cauſes are *neceſſary*, he ſhall never demonſtrate that it is impoſſible for the generality of any company of men to err who have every one of them free-will, and are every one of them liable to paſſion and miſtake.

§. 5. From all this it appears, that his whole *Diſcourſe* about the Original and Progreſs of Hereſie, and the multitudes of Hereticks in ſeveral Ages, is as clear a confutation of his own Demonſtration as can be deſired. The onely thing that he offers in that *Diſcourſe*, to prevent this Objection which he foreſaw it liable to, is this, *It is not* (ſays he *) *to be expected but that ſome contingencies ſhould have place, where an whole Species in a manner is to be wrought upon; it ſufficeth that the cauſes to preſerve Faith indeficiently entire are as efficacious as thoſe which are laid for the preſervation of Mankind, the vertue of Faith not being to continue longer than Mankind its onely ſubject does; and they will eaſily appear as efficacious as the other, if we conſider the ſtrength of thoſe cauſes before explicated, and reflect that they are effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themſelves of thoſe pleaſures which are the cauſes of Mankinds propagation; and if we look into Hiſtory for experience of what hath paſſed in the World ſince the propagating of Chriſtians, we ſhall find more particulars failing in propagating there kind, than their Faith.* To which I anſwer,

* P. 65.

Firſt, That it may reaſonably be expected there ſhould be no contingencies in any particulars, where cauſes of actual will are ſuppoſed to be put in all: *Becauſe* (as he ſays truly) *a cauſe put actually cauſing cannot but produce its effect.* Suppoſe then conſtant cauſes laid in all Mankind of an actual will to ſpeak Truth to the beſt of there knowledge, were it not reaſonable to expect that there would be no ſuch contingency to the Worlds end as that any man ſhould tell a lye? Nay, it were madneſs for any man to think any ſuch contingency ſhould be, ſuppoſing cauſes actually cauſing men always to ſpeak Truth.

Secondly, It is far from Truth *that the cauſes to preſerve Faith indeficiently entire, are as efficacious as thoſe which are laid for the propagation of Mankind.* And whereas he would prove the ſtrength of theſe cauſes which are laid to preſerve Faith, becauſe they are *effectively powerful to make multitudes daily debar themſelves of thoſe pleaſures which are the cauſes of mankinds propagation*; I hope no body that hath read the innumerable complaints which occur in there own Hiſtorians, and others of the beſt and moſt credible of their own Writers, of more than one Age, concerning the general vitiouſneſs and debauchery of their Prieſts and Monks, will be over-forward to believe that all thoſe who debar themſelves of lawful Marriage, do abſtain from thoſe unlawful pleaſures.

§. 6. But nothing can be more impudent than what he adds, *That if we look into Hiſtories for experience of what hath paſt in the World ſince the firſt planting of Chriſtianity, we ſhall find far more particulars failing in propagating their kind, than their Faith.* Do any Hiſtories confirm it to have been the experience of the World, that the far greateſt part of the World did in any Age give over propagating their kind? But Hiſtories do confirm that the far greateſt part of the Chriſtian World did fall off to *Arianiſm* and *Pelagianiſm*; and conſequently, as he ſuppoſeth, did deſert and renounce Tradition. Did ever whole Nations and vaſt Territories of the World either wholly, or for the far greateſt part of them, take up an humour againſt propagating Mankind? And yet both Hiſtory, and the experience of the preſent Age aſſures us, that a great part of *Aſia* and of *Africk* (where the moſt flouriſhing Churches in the World once were) are fallen off from *Chriſtianity*, and become either *Mahometans* or *Heathens*. In *Africk* almoſt all thoſe vaſt *Regions*, which Chriſtianity had gained from Heatheniſm, Mahometaniſm hath regained from Chriſtianity. All the North part of *Africk* lying along the *Mediterranean* (where Chriſtianity flouriſh'd once as much as ever it did at *Rome*) is at this time utterly void of Chriſtians, excepting a few Towns in the hands of the European Princes. And not to mention all particular places, the large Region of *Nubia*, which had (as is thought) from the Apoſtles time profeſſed the Chriſtian Faith, hath within theſe 150. years for want of Miniſters (as *Alverez** tells us) quitted Chriſtianity, and is partly revolted to heatheniſm, partly fallen off to Mahometaniſm. So that it ſeems, that notwithſtanding the *Argument of hope and fear*, the very Teachers of Tradition may fail in a largely extended Church. As for *Aſia*, in the *Eaſterly* parts of it, there is not now one Chriſtian to four of what there were 50 years ago; and in the more *Southerly* parts of it (where Chriſtianity had taken deepeſt root) the Chriſtians are far inferiour in number to the Idolaters and Mahometans, and do daily decreaſe. What thinks Mr. *S.* of all this? Have thoſe Chriſtian Nations which are turn'd Mahometans and Pagans failed in there Faith or not? If they have, I expect from him clear Inſtances of more that have failed in propagating their kind.

* Hiſt. Æthiop.

§. 7. But beſides thoſe who have totally Apoſtatized from Chriſtianity, hath not the whole *Greek* Church with the *Jacobites* and *Neſtorians*, and all thoſe other *Sects* which agree with and depend upon theſe, and which taken together are manifoldly greater than the *Roman* Church; I ſay, have not all theſe renounced Tradition for ſeveral Ages? And here in *Europe*, hath not a great part of *Poland*, *Hungary*, both *Germanies*, *France*, and *Switzerland*; Have not the Kingdoms of great *Britain*, *Denmark*, *Sweden* and a conſiderable part of *Ireland*, in Mr. *S*'s opinion deſerted Tradition? If I ſhould once ſee a whole Nation fail becauſe no body would marry and contribute to the propagating of Mankind; and ſhould find this ſullen humour to prevail in ſeveral Nations, and to over-ſpread vaſt Parts of the World, I ſhould then in good earneſt think it poſſible for Mankind to fail; unleſs I could ſhew it impoſſible for other Nations to do that which I ſee ſome to have done, who were every whit as unlikely to have done it. So that whatever *cauſe* he aſſigns of

Hereſie *, as *Pride*, *Ambition*, *Luſt*, or any other vice or intereſt, if theſe can take place in whole Nations, and make them renounce Tradition, then where's *the efficacy of the cauſes to preſerve Faith indeficiently entire in any*? For the Demonſtration holds as ſtrongly for all Chriſtians as for any.

* P. 67.

§. 8. *Secondly*, From theſe grounds it would follow that no Chriſtian can live wickedly; becauſe the end of Faith being a good life, the arguments of hope and fear muſt in all Reaſon be as powerful and efficacious cauſes of a good life, as of a true belief. And that his *Demonſtration* proves the one as much as the other, will be evident from his own reaſoning; for he * argues in this manner, *Good is the proper object of the will, good propos'd makes the will to deſire that good, and conſequently the known means to obtain it: Now infinite goods and harms ſufficiently propoſed are of their own nature incomparably more powerful cauſes to carry the will than temporal ones. Since then, when two cauſes are counterpoiſed, the leſſer when it comes to execution is no cauſe as to the ſubſiſtance of that effect, it follows that there is no cauſe to move the wills of a World of Believers to be willing to do that which they judge would loſe themſelves and their Poſterity infinite goods, and bring them infinite harms,* &c. *in caſe a ſufficient Propoſal or Application be not wanting*, which he tells us* is not wanting, becauſe *Chriſtianity urged to execution, gives its followers a new life & a new nature, than which a nearer Application cannot be imagined.* Doth not this Argument extend to the lives of Chriſtians, as well as their Belief; So that we may as well infer from theſe grounds, that it is impoſſible that thoſe who profeſs Chriſtianity ſhould live contrary to it, as that they ſhould fail to deliver down the Doctrine of Chriſt; becauſe whatever can be an inducement and temptation to any man, to contradict this Doctrine by his practice, may equally prevail upon him to falſifie it. For why ſhould men make any more ſcruple of damning themſelves and their Poſterity teaching them falſe Doctrines, than by living wicked Lives? which are equally pernicious with Heretical Doctrines, not onely upon account of the bad influence which ſuch examples of Fathers and Teachers are like to have upon their Scholars, but likewiſe they are one of the ſtrongeſt arguments in the world to perſwade them, that their Teachers do not themſelves believe that Religion which they teach; for if they did, they would live according to it. Why ſhould any man think, that thoſe arguments of hope and fear which will not prevail upon the generality of Chriſtians to make them live holy Lives, ſhould be ſo neceſſarily efficacious to make them ſo much concerned for the preſerving of a right Belief? Nay, we have great reaſon to believe that ſuch perſons will endeavour as much as may be, to bend and accommodate their Belief to there Lives. And this is the true ſource of thoſe Innovations in Faith for which we challenge the Church of *Rome*; which any man may eaſily diſcern, who will but conſider how all their new Doctrines are fitted to a ſecular Intereſt, and the gratifying of that inordinate appetite after riches and dominion which reigns in the Court of *Rome*, and in the upper part of the Clergy of that Church.

* P. 62.

* P. 63.

SECT. IV.

§. 1. SEcondly, The main grounds of his Demonſtration are apparently falſe: For,

Firſt, This Demonſtration ſuppoſeth that the generality of Chriſtian

The 2*d*. anſwer to his Demonſtration.

Parents in all Ages perfectly underſtood the Doctrine of Chriſt, and did not miſtake any part of it; that they remembred it perfectly, and that they were faithful and diligent to inſtruct their Children in it; which is as contrary to experience as that the generality of Chriſtians are knowing and honeſt. It ſuppoſeth likewiſe, that this Doctrine, and every ſubſtantial part of it, was received and remembred by the generality of Children as it was taught, and was underſtood perfectly by them without the leaſt material miſtake: So he tells us *, *That the ſubſtance of Faith comes clad in ſuch plain matters of Fact, that the moſt ſtupid man living cannot poſſibly be ignorant of it.* But whether this be reaſonable to be ſuppoſed or no, may eaſily be determined not onely from every man's own experience of the World, but from a more advantageous inſtance of the experience of the firſt Age of Chriſtianity. Was there ever a more knowing and diligent Teacher of this Doctrine than our Saviour? and yet his Diſciples fell into many miſtakes concerning it. So that in order to the certain propagating of it, the wiſedom of God thought it requiſite to endue even thoſe who had learned this Doctrine from himſelf with an infallible ſpirit, by which they might be led into all Truth, and ſecured from errour and miſtake; which had been unneceſſary had it been impoſſible for them to miſtake this Doctrine. The Apoſtles, who taught the World by an infallible Spirit, and with infinitely more advantage than ordinary Parents can teach their Children, yet in all the Churches which they planted they found Chriſtians very apt to miſtake and pervert their Doctrine, as appears by their frequent complaints in moſt of their Epiſtles. Nay the Apoſtle chargeth the Generality of the *Hebrews* * with ſuch a degree of dulneſs and ſtupidity, that after fitting time and means of inſtruction they were ſtill ignorant of the very Principles of Chriſtianity: So he tells them, *That when for the time they ought to be Teachers of others, they had need that one ſhould teach them again which be the firſt Principles of the Oracles of God.* And St. *Hierom* tells us *, *That the Primitive Churches were tainted with many groſs Errours whilſt the Apoſtles were alive, and the blood of Chriſt yet warm in* Judea. But it may be there have been better *Teachers* ſince, and *Children* are more apt to learn *now* than *Men* were *then*. Who knows how the World may be changed.

* P. 53.

* Heb. 5. 11, 12.

* Adverſ. Luciferian.

§. 2. *Secondly,* This Demonſtration ſuppoſeth the hopes and fears which Chriſtian Religion applies to Mens minds to be certain and neceſſary cauſes of actual will in Men to adhere to the Doctrine of Chriſt; and conſequently that they muſt neceſſarily adhere to it. That he ſuppoſeth them to be *neceſſary*, I have his own word for it; for he tells * us, That *he hath endeavoured to demonſtrate the indefectibleneſs of Tradition as the proper and neceſſary effect of thoſe cauſes which preſerve and continue Tradition on foot,* and what thoſe *cauſes* are he told us before *, *That they are Hopes and Fears ſtrongly applied.* But I hope that the indefectibleneſs of Tradition cannot be a *neceſſary effect* of the ſtrong application of thoſe Hopes and Fears, unleſs thoſe Hopes and Fears be a *neceſſary cauſe* of that effect. And indeed this is ſufficiently implied in his ſaying *that they are the cauſes of actual will* in Chriſtians to adhere to Tradition. For if theſe *cauſes of actual will* be conſtant (as he muſt ſuppoſe) then they are certain and neceſſary and infallible cauſes of adhering to this Doctrine. For whatever is in act is neceſſary while it is ſo, and if it be conſtantly in act, the effect is always neceſſary. But what a wild Suppoſition is this, That Moral Motives and Arguments working upon a free Principle, the Will of

* P. 75.

* P. 60.

Man, do neceſſarily produce their Effect? Is it neceſſary that the hopes of Heaven, and the fears of Hell ſhould keep Chriſtians conſtant to the Doctrine of Chriſt? and is it not as neceſſary that theſe arguments ſhould prevail upon them to the practice of it? It is in vain to go about to demonſtrate that all men muſt be good who have ſufficient arguments propounded to them, when experience tells us the contrary. Nay, it is in reaſon impoſſible that Moral arguments ſhould be of a neceſſary and infallible efficacy, becauſe they are always propounded to a free Agent, who may chuſe whether he will yield to them or not. Indeed it is always reaſonable that men ſhould yield to them, and if they be reaſonable they will; but ſo long as they are free it can never be infallibly certain that they will. And if men be not free, it is no vertue at all in them to be wrought upon by theſe arguments. For what vertue can it be in any man to entertain the Chriſtian Doctrine and adhere to it and live accordingly, if he does all this neceſſarily, *that is*, whether he will or no, and can no more chuſe whether he will or no, and can no more chuſe whether he will do ſo or not, than whether he will ſee the light when the Sun ſhines upon his eyes, or whether he will hear a ſound when all the Bells in the Town are Ringing in his ears, or (to uſe Mr. S's * own ſimilitudes) whether he will *feel heat, cold, pain, pleaſure, or any other material quality* that *affects* his *ſenſes*. We ſee then how unreaſonable his Suppoſitions are, and yet without theſe Grounds his Demonſtration falls. For if it be poſſible that Chriſtians may miſtake or forget the Doctrine of Chriſt, or any part of it, or be deffective in diligence to inſtruct others in it; or if it be poſſible that the Will of man which is free, may not be neceſſarily and infallibly ſwayed by the arguments of hope and fear, then it is poſſible that Tradition may fail. And is not this a good Demonſtration which ſupports it ſelf upon ſuch Principles as do directly affront the conſtant experience, and the cleareſt reaſon of Mankind?

* P. 53.

§. 5. And here I cannot but take notice how inconſiſtent he is to himſelf in laying the Grounds of Tradition's certainty. In one part of his Book he tells us *, *That Tradition hath for its Baſis the beſt Nature in the Univerſe, that is, Man's; Not according to his Moral part, defectible by reaſon of Original Corruption; nor yet his Intellectuals, darkly groping in the purſuit of Science,* &c. *But according to thoſe Faculties in him perfectly and neceſſarily ſubject to the operations and ſtrokes of Nature, that is, his Eyes, Ears, Handling, and the direct impreſſions of knowledge, as naturally and neceſſarily iſſuing from the affecting thoſe ſenſes, as it is to feel heat, cold, pain, pleaſure, or any other material quality.* So that according to this Diſcourſe, the *Baſis of Tradition* is not *Man's Nature* conſidered as *Moral*, and capable of *Intellectual Reflexion*; for in this conſideration it is *dark* and *defectible*: But *Man's Nature* conſidered onely as capable of *direct ſenſitive knowledge*, as acting *naturally and neceſſarily*. Which is to ſay, That Tradition is founded in the Nature of Man conſidered not as a Man but a Brute; under which conſideration, I ſee no reaſon why he ſhould call it *the beſt Nature in the Univerſe*. But now how will he reconcile this Diſcourſe with the *Grounds* of his *Demonſtration*? where he tells us, That the ſtability of Tradition is founded in the *Arguments of Hope and Fear*, the Objects of which being future and at a diſtance, cannot work upon a man immediately by *direct Impreſſions* upon his *ſenſes*, but muſt work upon him by way of *Intellectual Reflexion* and *Conſideration*. For I hope *he* will not deny but that the *Arguments of Hope and Fear* work

* P. 53.

work upon man according to his Moral and Intellectual part, elſe how are they Arguments? And if man according to his *Moral part* be (as he ſays) *defectible*, how can the *indefectibility* of Tradition be founded in thoſe Arguments which work upon man onely according to his *Moral part*? I have purpoſely all along (both for the Readers eaſe and mine own) neglected to take notice of ſeveral of his inconſiſtences, but theſe are ſuch clear and tranſparent Contradictions, that I could do no leſs than make an example of them.

SECT. V.

§. 1. THirdly, This Demonſtration is confuted by clear and undeniable *Inſtances* to the contrary. I will mention but *two*.

Firſt, The Tradition of the one true God, which was the eaſieſt to be preſerved of any Doctrine in the World, being ſhort and plain, planted in every man's Nature, and perfectly ſuted to the reaſon of Mankind. And yet this Tradition, not having paſt through many hands (by reaſon of the long Age of man) was ſo defaced and corrupted, that the World did lapſe into Polytheiſm and Idolatry. Now a man that were ſo hardy as to demonſtrate againſt matter of Fact, might by a ſtronger Demonſtration than Mr. *S*'s, prove that though it be certain this Tradtiion hath failed, yet it was impoſſible it ſhould fail; as *Zeno* demonſtrated the impoſſibility of motion againſt *Diogenes* walking before his eyes. For the Doctrine of the one true God *was ſetled in the heart of* Noah, *and firmly beleived* by him *to be the way to happineſs, and the contradicting or deſerting of this, to be the way to miſery.* And this Doctrine was by him ſo taught to his Children, who were *encouraged* by theſe Motives *to adhere to this Doctrine*, and to propagate it to their Children, and *were deterred by them from relinquiſhing it. And this was in all Ages the perſwaſion of the faithful.* Now the *Hopes* of Happineſs, and the *Fears* of Miſery *ſtrongly applied, are the cauſes of actual will. Beſides, the thing was feaſible, or within their power*; that is, *what they are bred to was knowable by them*, and that much more eaſily then any other Doctrine whatſoever, being ſhort, and plain, and natural. *This put, it follows as certainly that a great number in each Age would continue to hold themſelves, and teach their Children as themſelves had been taught*, that is, *would follow and ſtick to this Tradition of the one true God, as it doth that a cauſe put actually cauſing produceth its effect. Actually I ſay; for ſince the cauſe is put, and the Patient diſpoſed, it follows inevitably that the cauſe is put ſtill actually cauſing.* This demonſtration which concludes an apparent falſhood hath the whole ſtrength of Mr. *S*'s, and ſeveral advantages beyond it. For the Doctrine conveyed by this Tradition is the moſt important, being the firſt Principle of all Religion; the danger of corrupting it as great, the facility of preſerving it much greater, than of the Chriſtian Doctrine, for the cauſes before mentioned. And yet after all, it ſignifies nothing againſt certain experience, and unqueſtionable matter of Fact; onely it ſufficiently ſhews the vanity of Mr. *S*'s pretended Demonſtration built upon the ſame or weaker Grounds.

§. 2. *Secondly*, The other *Inſtance* ſhall be in the *Greek* Church, who received the Chriſtian Doctrine as entire from the Apoſtles, and had as great an obligation to propagate it truely to poſterity, and the ſame *fears and hopes ſtrongly applied to be the actual cauſes of will*; in a word, all the ſame Arguments and Cauſes to preſerve and continue Tradition on foot, which the *Roman* Church had: And yet, to the utter confuſion of Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration, Tradition hath failed among them. For as *Speculators*, they deny the *proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt from the Son*, and as *Teſtifiers* they diſown any ſuch Doctrine to have been delivered to them by the precedent Age, or to any other Age of their Church by the Apoſtles as the Doctrine of Chriſt.

§. 3. To this *Inſtance* of the *Greek* Church, becauſe Mr. *White* hath offered ſomething by way of anſwer, I ſhall here conſider it. He tells us *, *That the plea of the Greek Church is Non-Tradition, alledging onely this, That their Fathers do not deliver the Doctrine of the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt; not that they ſay the contrary, which clearly demonſtrates there are no oppoſite Traditions between them and us.* But this was not the thing Mr. *White* was concerned to do, to demonſtrate there were no oppoſite Traditions between the *Greeks* and the *Latines*, but to ſecure his main Demonſtration of the impoſſibility of Traditions failing againſt this *Inſtance*. For that the *Greeks* have no ſuch Tradition as this, *That the Holy Ghoſt proceeds from the Son*, is as good evidence of the failure of Tradition as if they had a poſitive Tradition, *That he proceeds onely from the Father*; eſpecially if we conſider that *they* * charge the *Latin* Church with *Innovation* in this matter, and ſay that the addition of that Clauſe, *of the proceſſion from the Son alſo*, is a corruption of the ancient Faith, and a Deviliſh Invention. Why then does Mr. *White* go about to baffle ſo material an Objection (and, I fear his own Conſcience likewiſe) by a pitiful Evaſion inſtead of a ſolid Anſwer? What though there be no *oppoſite Traditions* between the *Greek* and *Latin* Church, yet if their Faith be oppoſite, will it not from hence follow that Tradition hath failed in one of them? I wonder that Mr. *White*, who hath ſo very well confuted the Infallibility of Popes and Councils, and thereby undermined the very Foundation of that Religion, ſhould not by the ſame light of Reaſon diſcover the fondneſs of his own Opinion concerning the Infallibility of Oral Tradition, which hath more and greater abſurdites in it than that which he confutes. And to ſhew Mr. *White* the abſurdity of it, I will apply his Demonſtration of the Infallibility of *Chriſtian* Tradition in general, to the *Greek* Church in particular; by which every one will ſee that it does as ſtrongly prove the impoſſibility of Traditions failing in the *Greek* Church, as in the *Roman Catholick*, as they are pleaſed to call it. His Demonſtration is this *; *Chriſt commanded his Apoſtles to preach to all the World, and leſt any one ſhould doubt of the effect, he ſent his Spirit into them to bring to their remembrance what he had taught them; which Spirit did not onely give them a power to do what he enclined them to, but did cauſe them actually to do it.* I cannot but take notice by the way of the ill conſequence of this, which is, that men may doubt, whether thoſe who are to teach the Doctrine of Chriſt, will remember it, and teach it to others, unleſs they have that extraordinary and efficacious aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt which the Apoſtles had, if this be true, his Demonſtration is at an end, for he cannot plead that this aſſiſtance hath been continued ever ſince the Apoſtles. He proceeds, *The Apoſtles preached this Doctrine; the Nations underſtood it, lived according to it, and valued it as that which was neceſſary to them and there Poſterity incomparably beyond any thing elſe.* All this I ſuppoſe done to, and by the *Greeks* as well as any other Nation. *Theſe things*

* Apology for Tradition, p. 51.

* Phoc. Ep. 7.

* De Fid. & Theol. Tract. 1. Sect. 4.

things being put, it cannot enter into any man's underſtanding, but that the Chriſtian [Greeks] *of the firſt Age, being the Scholars of the Apoſtles, could and would earneſtly commend the Chriſtian Doctrine to their Poſterity; if ſo, it is evident that they did. So that the continuance of purity of the Faith in the* [Greek] *Church is founded upon this, That Fathers always delivered the ſame Doctrine to their Children which they had received from their Fathers, and did believe it under this very Notion and Title as received; nor could any one* [of that Church] *deliver another Doctrine under this Title, but he would be convinced of a Lye by the reſt; and if the whole* [Greek] *Church ſhould endeavour to deliver a new Doctrine under that Title,* [and there's the ſame reaſon if they ſhould leave out any Article of the old Doctrine] *that whole Age would be in their Conſciences condemned of perfidiouſneſs and paricide. Now this is as impoſſible, as it is that all Mankind ſhould conſpire to kill them-* * Ibid. Sect. 5. *ſelves.* And he afterwards * gives the reaſon why it is ſo impoſſible that Tradition ſhould fail, and it is a very bold and ſaucy one, *That if the Tradition of the Chriſtian Faith be more firm than the courſe of the Sun and Moon, and the propagation of Mankind, then God hath ſhewn himſelf an unskilful Artificer.* What is there in all this Demonſtration, which may not be accommodated to the *Greek* Church with as much force and advantage as to the *Catholick*? Unleſs he can ſhew that it is very poſſible that all the Men in *Greece* may conſpire to kill themſeves, but yet abſolutely impoſſible that all the Men in the World ſhould do ſo; which I am ſure he cannot ſhew, unleſs he can demonſtrate that though it be poſſible for a Million, of as wiſe men as any are to be found in the World together, to conſpire to do a fooliſh action; yet it is impoſſible that an Hundred Millions not one jot wiſer than the other, ſhould agree together to the doing of it.

§. 4. From all this it appears, That Mr. *White's* Anſwer to this Objection, doth not ſignifie any thing to his purpoſe. For if the *Proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt*, was part of Chriſt's Doctrine, then it was delivered by the Apoſtles to the *Greek* Church; if ſo, they could not fail to deliver it down to the next Age, and that to the next, and ſo on; but it ſeems they have failed. Where then *is the force of hopes and fears ſtrongly applied? Where are the certain Cauſes of actual Will to adhere to this Doctrine?* Why is not the effect produced, *the Cauſes being put actually cauſing?* If the Apoſtles delivered this Doctrine, Oral Tradition is ſo clear and *unmiſtak-* * P. 53. & 54. *able*, and * *brings down Faith clad in ſuch plain matters of Fact, that the moſt ſtupid man living* (much leſs the *Greeks*, that were the flower of * Ibid. Mankind) *could not poſſibly be ignorant of it; nay* *, *it exceeds all the power of Nature to blot Knowledge thus fixt out of the Soul of one ſingle Believer* * P. 78. (much more out of ſo vaſt a Church) And * *ſince no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change and innovate without knowing he did ſo, 'tis a manifeſt impoſſiblity, a whole Church ſhould in any Age fall into an abſurdity ſo inconſiſtent with the nature of one ſingle man.* * P. 86. And * ſince *'tis natural for every man to ſpeak Truth, and Grace is to perfect Nature in whatever is good in it, it follows that one truly Chriſtian heart is far more fixt to Veracity, than others not imbu'd with theſe heavenly Tenets; and conſequently that a multitude of ſuch muſt incomparably exceed in point of teſtifying the ſame number of others, unfortified by Chriſt's Doctrine.* * P. 87. And ſince * *ſuch a thought cannot enter into the moſt depraved Nature, as to harm another without any good to himſelf, and yet this muſt be if we put Chriſtian Fathers miſteaching their Children unreceived Doctrines for received*

ceived (and I hope for the ſame reaſon received Doctrines for unreceived) *contrary to their knowledge. For ſuppoſing Sanctity in the* (Greek) *Church* (and why may not we as well as in the *Latin*) *That is, that multitudes in it make Heaven their firſt love, and look on ſpiritual goods as their main concern,* &c. *it follows that had the Fathers* of that Church *in any Age conſented to miſlead their Poſterity from what themſelves* (not onely) *conceited* (but knew) *to be true, they ſhould do the moſt extreme harm imaginable to others without any the leaſt good to themſelves; which is perhaps impoſſible in one ſingle man, more in few, but infinitely in a multitude, eſpecially of good men.*

§. 5. Thus I might apply the reſt of his Ranting Rhetorick (but that I am weary of Tranſcribing it) concerning * *the natural love of Parents to* * P. 90, 91.
their Children (unleſs we ſuppoſe the *Greek* Church deſtitute of it) which muſt needs engage them to uſe the means proper to bring them to Heaven, and ſave them from Hell: As alſo concerning *the natural care men have of not loſing their Credit by telling pernicious Lyes.* And, not to omit the beſt part of his Demonſtration * (which was therefore prudently * P. 93.
reſerved to the laſt place) I might likewiſe ſhew *how the Principles of each Science, Arithmetick, Geometry, Logick, Nature, Morality, Hiſtorical Prudence, Politicks, Metaphyſicks, Divinity,* and laſt of all the new *Science* of *Controverſie* (as he calls it) or the bleſſed Art of Eternal wrangling and diſputing (*the firſt Principle* whereof (he tells us) is, *That Tradition is certain*) do all contribute to ſhew the certainty of Tradition, that is, the impoſſibility that any part of Chriſt's Doctrine ſhould fail in the *Greek* Church any more than in the *Latin.* And ſurely *Arithmetick, Geometry, Logick, Natural Philoſophy, Metaphyſicks,* &c. will all ſtand up for the *Greek Church* in this quarrel; for conſidering that *Greece* was the place where the *Arts* and *Sciences* were born and bred, it is not to be imagined that they ſhould be ſo diſingenuous and unnatural, as not to contribute their beſt aſſiſtance to the ſervice of their Countrey.

§. 6. But it may be the *Greeks* cannot ſo juſtly pretend to Oral Tradition as the *Latins.* What if St. *Peter,* the Head of the Apoſtles, thought fit to ſhare Scripture and Tradition between theſe two Churches, and laying his left hand on the *Greek* Church and his right on the *Latin,* was pleaſed to confer *the great bleſſing of Oral Tradition* upon the *Latin* Church? which being to be the ſeat of Infallibility, it was but fitting that ſhe ſhould be furniſh't with this infallible way of conveying the Chriſtian Doctrine. And therefore it may be, that as the *Scriptures* of the New Teſtament were left in *Greek,* ſo *Oral Tradition* was delivered down onely in *Latin.* This I confeſs is not altogether without ſome ſhew of reaſon: Mr. *S.* may do well to take the matter into his deeper conſideration; he hath in his time improved as weak probabilities as theſe into luſty Demonſtrations. And if he could but demonſtrate this, it would very much weaken the force of this *Inſtance* of the *Greek* Church; otherwiſe (for ought I ſee) this Inſtance will hold good againſt *him*; and whatever he can ſay for the impoſſibility of Tradition's failing in the *Latin* Church, may all be ſaid of the *Greek* Church, if he will but grant that the Apoſtles preached the ſame Doctrine to them both; that the arguments of hope and fear which this Doctrine contains in it, were applied as ſtrongly to the *Greeks* as the *Latins.* And yet notwithſtanding all this, Tradition hath plainly failed in the *Greek* Church. Let him now aſſign the Age wherein ſo vaſt a number of men conſpired to leave out the *Article* of the *Proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt*; and ſhew how it was poſſible a whole Age could conſpire together to damn their Poſterity; or how the Faith of immediate Fore-fathers might be altered without any ſuch Conſpiracy; and we are ready to ſatisfie him how the Doctrine of the *Latin* Church might be corrupted and altered, and to tell him punctually in what Age it was done. And until he do this, I would entreat him to trouble us no more with thoſe canting queſtions (wherein yet the whole force of his Demonſtration lies) How is it poſſible a whole Age ſhould conſpire to change the Doctrine of their Fore-fathers? And in what Age was this done? For if it be reaſonable to demand of us, in order to the overthrowing of his Demonſtration, to aſſign the particular Age wherein the *Latin* Church conſpired to change the ancient Doctrine; with the ſame reaſon we require of him, in order to the maintaining of his Demonſtration, to name the particular Age wherein the *Greek* Church conſpired to alter the Doctrine of Chriſt (which was undoubtedly in the firſt Age truly delivered to them by the Apoſtles) and alſo to ſhew from the rational force and ſtrength of Tradition, how it is more impoſſible for the *whole Church* to have failed in tranſmitting the Doctrine of Chriſt down to us, or to have conſpired to the altering of it, than for ſuch a multitude of Chriſtians as is the vaſt body of the *Greek Church*. If Mr. *S*, or Mr. *White* ſhew this, they do ſomething; otherwiſe, I muſt tell them, that unleſs they can manage theſe *pretty things* they call *Demonſtrations* better, they muſt ſhortly either quit their Reaſon, or their Religion; or elſe return to the honeſt old *Mumpſimus* of the Infallibility of the Church from an extraordinary and immediate aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt; or (to make the buſineſs ſhort, and ſtop all gaps with one Buſh) come over to the *Jeſuits*, and acknowledge the *Popes Infallibility* both in matters of *Faith* and *Fact*; by which means they may reconcile themſelves to *him*, and prevent that direful ſtroke which threatens them from *Rome*, and is ready to cut them off from the Body of the *Traditionary Church*. And thus I have done with his *Firſt Demonſtration*; and I take it for a good ſign that the Popiſh Cauſe is at a very low Ebb, when ſuch *ſtuff* as this muſt be called *Demonſtration*.

SECT. VI.

Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration *à Poſteriori*.

§. 1. I Come now to his *Demonſtration à Poſteriori*, which although it fall of it ſelf if the *Demonſtration à Priori* fail; yet becauſe it hath ſome peculiar abſurdities of its own, I ſhall conſider it by it ſelf as well as with relation to the other.

§. 2. Before he comes to lay it down with the *Grounds* of it, according to his uſual faſhion, he premiſeth ſomething as yielded by Proteſtants which, in his ſenſe, no Proteſtant ever granted. Juſt ſo he dealt with us before concerning the Scriptures, ſaying, That by them the Proteſtants *muſt mean unſenſed Letters and Characters*. But let us ſee what it is. * *That this Demonſtration* à Poſteriori, *ſeems a needleſs endeavour againſt the Proteſtants, who yield that thoſe Points in which we agree, as the Trinity, Incarnation*, &c. *came down by this way of Tradition*; *And this* (he ſaith) *no Proteſtants ever denied.* And then he asks, *Whether the*

* P. 76.

the ſame virtue of Tradition would not have been as powerful to bring down other Points in which we do not agree, had any ſuch been? Now if he ſpeak any thing to his own purpoſe, he muſt ſuppoſe Proteſtants to yield, that all thoſe Points wherein we are agreed, were conveyed down to us ſolely by Oral Tradition without Writing: But this all Proteſtants deny. So that, that onely which would avail his Cauſe againſt us, is to ſhew, that thoſe Points wherein we differ, have not only come down to us by Oral Teaching, but that they are likewiſe contained in Scripture, without which, we ſay, we can have no ſufficient certainty and aſſurance at this diſtance, that they were the Doctrine of Chriſt, and that they were not either totally innovated, or elſe corrupted in the conveyance from what they were at firſt. And if he can ſhew this concerning any Point in difference, I promiſe to yield it to him.

§. 3. I come now to his *Demonſtration*, which I ſhall ſet down in his own words with the *Principles* upon which it relies. * *The effect then we will pitch upon, and avow to be the proper one of ſuch a cauſe, is the preſent perſwaſion of Traditionary Chriſtians (or Catholicks) that their Faith hath deſcended from Chriſt and his Apoſtles uninterruptedly, which we find moſt firmly rooted in their heart; and the exiſtence of this perſwaſion we affirm to be impoſſible without the exiſtence of Traditions ever indeficiency to beget it. To prove this, I lay this firſt Principle; That Age, which holds her Faith thus delivered from the Apoſtles, neither can it ſelf have changed any thing in it nor know or doubt that any Age ſince the Apoſtles had changed or innovated therein. The ſecond Principle ſhall be this. No Age could innovate any thing, and withal deliver that very thing to Poſterity as received from Chriſt by continual Succeſſion.* The Sum of which is this, That becauſe a preſent multitude of Chriſtians (*viz.* the *Roman* Church) are perſwaded, that Chriſt's Doctrine hath deſcended to them ſolely by an uninterrupted Oral Tradition, therefore this perſwaſion is an effect which cannot be attributed to any other cauſe but the indeficiency of Oral Tradition. For if neither the preſent Age, nor any Age before, could make any change or innovation, then the perſwaſion of the preſent Age is a plain Demonſtration that this Doctrine was always the ſame, and conſequently that Tradition cannot fail.

* P. 77, 78.

§. 4. In anſwer to this, I ſhall endeavour to make good theſe *Four* things,

Firſt, That theſe *Principles* wholly rely upon the Truth of the *Grounds* of his *Demonſtration à Priori*.

Secondly, That theſe *Principles* are not ſufficiently proved by him.

Thirdly, That Doctrines and Practices, which muſt be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the ſame pretence to uninterrupted Tradition.

Fourthly, That it is not the preſent perſwaſion of the Church of *Rome* (whom he calls the Traditionary Chriſtians) nor ever was, that their Faith hath deſcended to them ſolely by Oral Tradition. If I can now make good theſe *Four* things, I hope his Demonſtration is at an end.

SECT. VII.

The *Firſt* Anſwer to his ſecond Demonſtration.

§. 1. THat theſe *Principles* wholly rely upon the truth of the *Grounds* of his *Demonſtration à Priori*. For if the Doctrine of Chriſt was either imperfectly taught in any Age, or miſtaken by the Learners, or any part of it forgotten (as it ſeems the whole *Greek* Church have forgot that fundamental Point of the *Proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt*, as the *Roman* Church accounts it) or if the Arguments of hope and fear be not neceſſary cauſes of actual will to adhere to Tradition; then there may have been changes and innovations in any Age, and yet men may pretend to have followed Tradition. But I have ſhewn, that Ignorance, and Negligence, and Miſtake, and Pride, and Luſt, and Ambition, and any other Vice or Intereſt, may hinder thoſe cauſes from being effectual to preſerve Tradition entire and uncorrupted. And when they do ſo, it is not to be expected that thoſe Perſons, who innovate and change the Doctrine, ſhould acknowledge that their new Doctrines are contrary to the Doctrine of Chriſt; but that they ſhould at firſt advance them as Pious, and after they have prevailed and gained general entertainment, then impudently affirm that they were the very Doctrines which Chriſt delivered; which they may very ſecurely do, when they have it in their power to burn all that ſhall deny it.

§. 2. I will give a clear *Inſtance* of the poſſibility of this in the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*, by ſhewing how this might eaſily come in, in the Ninth or Tenth Age after Chriſt. We will ſuppoſe then that about this time, when univerſal Ignorance, and the genuine Daughter of it (call her Devotion or Superſtition) had over-ſpread the World, and the generality of People were ſtrongly enclined to believe ſtrange things; and even the greateſt Contradictions were recommended to them under the notion of Myſteries, being told by their Prieſts and Guides, that the more contradictious any thing is to Reaſon, the greater merit there is in believing it: I ſay, let us ſuppoſe, that in this ſtate of things, one or more of the moſt eminent then in the Church, either out of deſign, or out of ſuperſtitious ignorance and miſtake of the ſenſe of our Saviour's words uſed in the Conſecration of the Sacrament, ſhould advance this new Doctrine, That the words of Conſecration, *This is my Body*, are not to be underſtood by any kind of *Trope* (as the like forms in Scripture are, as *I am the Vine*, *I am the Door*, which are plain *Tropes*) but being uſed about this great Myſtery of the Sacrament ought in all reaſon to be ſuppoſed to contain in them ſome notable Myſtery; which they will do, if they be underſtood of a real change of the ſubſtance of Bread and Wine, made by virtue of theſe words, in the real Body and Bloud of our Saviour. And in all this, I ſuppoſe nothing but what is ſo far from being impoſſible, that it is too uſual, for men either out of Ignorance or Intereſt, to advance new Opinions in Religion. And ſuch a Doctrine as this was very likely to be advanced by the ambitious *Clergy* of that time, as a probable means to draw in the People to a greater veneration of them; which advantage Mr. *Ruſhworth* * ſeems to be very ſenſible of, when he tells us, That the power of the Prieſt in this particular, is *ſuch a privilege, as if all the learned Clerks that ever lived ſince the beginning of the World, ſhould have ſtudied to raiſe, advance, and magnifie ſome one ſtate of men to the higheſt pitch of Reverence and Eminency, they would never (without ſpecial light from Heaven) have thought of any thing comparable to this.* I am of his mind, that it was a very notable device, but (I am apt to think) invented *without any ſpecial light from Heaven.* Nor was ſuch a Doctrine leſs likely to take and prevail among the *People* in an Age prodigiouſly ignorant, and ſtrongly enclined to Superſtition, and thereby well prepared to receive the groſſeſt Abſurdities under the notion of Myſteries; eſpecially if they were ſuch as might ſeem to conciliate a greater honour and reverence to the Sacrament. Now ſuppoſing ſuch a Doctrine as this, ſo fitted to the humour and temper of the Age, to be once aſſerted, either by chance, or out of deſign, it would take like wild-fire: eſpecially if by ſome one or more who bore ſway in the Church, it were but recommended with convenient gravity and ſolemnity. And although Mr. *Ruſhwoth* ſays[*], It is *impoſſible that the Authority of one man* ſhould ſway ſo much in the World, becauſe (ſays he) *ſurely the Devil himſelf would rather help the Church, than permit ſo little pride among men*; yet I am not ſo thoroughly ſatisfied with this cunning reaſon: For though he delivers it confidently, and with a *ſurely*, yet I make ſome doubt whether the Devil would be ſo forward to help the Church; nay, on the contrary, I am enclined to think that he would rather chuſe to connive at this humble and obſequious temper in men, in order to the overthrow of Religion, than croſs a deſign ſo dear to him by unſeaſonable temptations to pride: So that notwithſtanding Mr. *Ruſhworth*'s reaſon, it ſeems very likely that ſuch a Doctrine, in ſuch an Age, might eaſily be propagated by the influence and authority of one or a few great Perſons in the Church. For nothing can be more ſutable to the eaſie and paſſive temper of ſuperſtitious Ignorance, than to entertain ſuch a Doctrine with all imaginable greedineſs, and to maintain it with a proportionable Zeal. And if there be any wiſer than the reſt, who make Objections againſt it as if this Doctrine were new and full of contradictions, they may eaſily be born down by the ſtream, and by the eminency and authority and pretended ſanctity of thoſe who are the heads of this Innovation. And when this Doctrine is generally ſwallowed, and all that oppoſe it are looked upon and puniſhed as Hereticks, then it is ſeaſonable to maintain that this Doctrine was the doctrine of Fore-fathers; to which end it will be ſufficient to thoſe who are willing to have it true, to bend two or three ſayings of the Ancients to that purpoſe. And as for the contradictions contained in this Doctrine, it was but telling the People then (as they do in effect now) that contradictions ought to be no ſcruple in the way of Faith: that the more impoſſible any thing is, tis the fitter to be believed: that it is not praiſe-worthy to believe plain poſſibilities, but this is the gallantry and heroical power of Faith, this is the way to oblige God Almighty for ever to us, to believe flat and down-right contradictions: For *God requires at the Peoples hands* (as Mr. *Ruſhworth*[*] tells us) *a Credulity of things above and beyond Nature; nay, beyond all the Fables, be it ſpoken with reſpect, that ever man invented.* After this Doctrine hath proceeded thus far, and by the moſt inhumane ſeverities and cruelties ſuppreſt Diſſenters, or in a good meaſure rooted them out; then if they pleaſe even this new word *Tranſubſtantiation* may pretend alſo to Antiquity, and in time be confidently vouched for a word uſed by Chriſtians in all Ages, and tranſmitted down to them by thoſe from whom they received the Doctrine of the Sacrament as *a term of Art* appendant to it. And when a ſuperſtitious Church and deſigning Governours have once gained this Poſt, and by means of this enormous Article of *Tranſubſtantiation* have ſufficiently debauched the minds of men, and made a breach in their underſtandings wide enough for the entertaining of any Errour, though never ſo groſs and ſenſleſs; then Innovations come in a-main, and by ſholes; and the more abſurd and unreaſonable any thing is, it is for that very reaſon the more proper matter for an Article of Faith. And if any of theſe Innovations be objected againſt, as contrary to former belief and practice, it is but putting forth a luſty act of Faith, and believing another contradiction, that though they be contrary yet they are the ſame.

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* Dial. 1. Sect. 4.

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[*] Dial. 3. Sect. 7.

[*] Dial. 1. Sect. 4.

§. 3. And there is nothing in all this, but what is agreeable both to Hiſtory and Experience. For that the Ninth and Tenth Ages, and thoſe which followed them till the Reformation, were thus prodigiouſly ignorant and ſuperſtitious, is confirmed by the unanimous conſent of all Hiſtories; and even by thoſe Writers, that have been the greateſt Pillars of there own Religion. And Experience tells us, that in what Age ſoever there are a great company of ſuperſtitious People, there will never be wanting a few crafty Fellows to make uſe of this eaſie and pliable humour to their own ends. Now that this was the ſtate of thoſe Ages of the Church, will be evident to any from theſe Teſtimonies. *Platina* * writes of Pope *Romanus* that he null'd the acts of his Predeceſſour *Stephanus*; *For* (ſays he) *theſe Popes minded nothing elſe but how they might extinguiſh both the Name and Dignity of their Predeceſſors.* And if ſo, who can doubt, but that theſe Popes who made it their buſineſs to deſtroy the very memory of their Anceſtours, would be very little careful to preſerve the Doctrine of Fore-fathers. But what the care of thoſe Times was in this particular, may be Conjectured from what *Onuphrius* * ſays by way of confutation of that *paſſage* in *Platina*, concerning Pope *Joan's* reading publickly at *Rome* at her firſt coming thither. *This* (ſays he) *is utterly falſe, for there was nothing that they were leſs ſolicitous about in thoſe Times, than to furniſh the City with any publick Teachers.* And the Time which *Onuphrius* ſpeaks of, was much about the beginning of the Tenth Century. *Phil. Bergomenſis* * ſays, *It happened in that Age through the ſlothfulneſs of men, that there was a general decay of Vertue both in the Head and Members.* Again *, *Theſe Times through the Ambition and cruel Tyranny of the Popes were extremely unhappy, —For the Popes ſetting aſide the fear of God and his worſhip, fell into ſuch enmities among themſelves, as cruel Tyrants exerciſe towards one another.* Sabellicus * ſays, *It is wonderful to obſerve what a ſtrange forgetfulneſs of all Arts did about this time ſeize upon men; inſomuch that neither the Popes, nor other Princes ſeem'd to have any ſenſe or apprehenſion of any thing that might be uſeful to humane life. There were no wholeſome Laws, no Reparations of Churches, no purſuit of liberal Arts; but a kind of ſtupidity and madneſs and forgetfulneſs of manners had poſſeſſed the minds of men,* And a little after, *I cannot* (ſays he) *but much wonder, from whence theſe Tragical Examples of Popes ſhould ſpring; and how their minds ſhould come to be ſo devoid of all Piety, as neither to regard the Perſon which they ſuſtained, nor the place they were in.* *Sigonius* * ſpeaking of theſe Times, about the beginning of the Tenth Century, calls them *the fouleſt and blackeſt, both in reſpect of the wickedneſs of Princes, and the madneſs of the People, that are to be found in all Antiquity* *Genebrard* * ſpeaking of the ſame Time, *This* (ſays he) *is called the unhappy Age; being deſtitute of men eminent for Wit and Learning, as alſo of famous Princes and Popes. In this Time there was ſcarce any thing done worthy to be remembred by Poſterity.* And he adds afterwards, *But chiefly unhappy in this one thing, that for almoſt 150 years together, about 50 Popes, did utterly degenerate from the vertue of their Anceſtours.* He ſhould have added farther, but even to a miracle *happy* in another reſpect, that during this long and total degeneracy from the Piety and Vertue of their Anceſtours, they

* In Vit. Romani, Papæ 117. A.C. 900.

* In Platin.

* Anno 906.

* Anno 908.

* Ennead. 9. L. 1. Anno. 900.

* De Regn. Ital. L. 6.

* Chron. L. 4.

they did not in the leaſt ſwerve from them in matter of Faith and Doctrine: A thing incredible, were there not *Demonſtration* for it. *Werner* * gives this Character of that Time; *About the year of our Lord One Thouſand, there began an effeminate Time, in which the Chriſtian Faith began to degenerate exceedingly, and to decline from its ancient vigour*; inſomuch *that in many Countries of Chriſtendom, neither Sacraments nor Eccleſiaſtical Rites were obſerved— And people were given to Soothſaying and Witchcrafts, and the Prieſt was like the People.* It ſeems by this Teſtimony, that Tradition did faulter a little in that Age, elſe the *Chriſtian Faith* could not poſſibly have degenerated and declined ſo very much: And (which threatens Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration moſt of all) that the *Practical* Tradition of *Sacraments*, and other *Eccleſiaſtical Obſervances* did fail in *many Chriſtian Countries.* *Gerbert* *, who lived in that Time, gives this ſhort Character of the *Roman* Church, in an Epiſtle of his to *Stephen* Deacon of that Church, *The World ſtands amazed at the Manners of* Rome. But moſt full is the complaint of a great *Prelate* of the Church * concerning thoſe Times; *In the Weſt* (ſays he) *and almoſt all the World over (eſpecially among thoſe who were called the Faithful) Faith failed, and there was no fear of God among them*: (it ſeems the Argument of Fear had loſt its force) *Juſtice was periſhed from among men, and violence prevailing againſt equity governed the Nations. Fraud, Deceit, and the Arts of Couzenage were grown univerſal. All kind of Vertue gave way as an uſeleſs thing, and wickedneſs ſupply'd its place. The World ſeemed to be declining apace towards its Evening, and the ſecond coming of the Son of man to draw near: For love was grown cold, and Faith was not found upon Earth. All things were in Confuſion, and the World looked as if it would return to its old Chaos.— All ſorts of Fornication were committed with the ſame freedom as if they had been lawful Actions; for men neither bluſhed at them, nor were puniſh'd for them——Nor did the Clergy live better than the People.——For the Biſhops were grown negligent of the Duty of their place,* &c. *In a word, men ran themſelves headlong into all Vice, and all Fleſh had corrupted its way.* And farther to ſhew the great neglect of Prieſts and Biſhops in the work of Teaching and Inſtructing (which is ſo neceſſary to the preſerving of Tradition inviolable) I will add the Teſtimony of one * who lived in thoſe Times; who tells us. *That in thoſe days, the Prieſts and Biſhops, who ought to have been the Pillars of the Church, were ſo negligent that they did not mind the Divine Scripture; nor take any care to teach and inſtruct Scholars that might ſucceed them, as we read holy Men had uſed to do, who left many Scholars perfectly inſtructed to be their Succeſſours.* If they had onely neglected the Scriptures, all might have been well enough; but it ſeems they took no care to inſtruct people in the way of *Oral Tradition*, nor to furniſh the Church with a new Generation of able Teachers who might *deliver down from hand to hand the ſenſe and faith of Fore-fathers.* This laſt Teſtimony, the late Learned Lord Primate of *Ireland*, Biſhop *Vſher* (in his Book *De Chriſtian Eccleſ. Succeſſ*, &c. * where ſeveral of the Teſtimonies I have produced, with many more to the ſame purpoſe, may be ſeen) cites out of a *M. S.* in *Bennet* College Library in *Cambridge*; concerning the Authority of which *M. S.* there need be no diſpute between *Mr. S.* and me; becauſe the whole force and effect of this Teſtimony is ſufficiently contained in thoſe Citations which I have brought out of publick and unqueſtionable Books.

§. 4.

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* Faſcic. Tempor.

* Epiſt. 40.

* Beli. Sacr. L. 1. c. 8.

* Elfric. Ser. ad Sacerdot.

* C. 2. & 3.

§. 4. All theſe Teſtimonies which I have produced are, in general and for the ſubſtance of them, confirmed by *Two* of the greateſt Props of the *Romiſh* Church; *Bellarmine* and *Baronius*. *Bellarmine* * ſays of this Tenth Age, *That there was never any either more unlearned or more unhappy.* *Baronius* * ſpeaks more particularly, *What was then the face of the Roman Church? How deformed? When Whores, no leſs powerful than vile, bore the chief ſway at* Rome; *and at their pleaſure changed Sees, appointed Biſhops; and (which it is horrible to mention) did thruſt into St.* Peter's *See their own Gallants, falſe Popes, who would not have been mentioned in the Catalogue of the Roman Popes, but onely for the more diſtinct Recording of ſo long a Succeſſion of Times.* And a little after, *Chriſt was then (it ſeems) in a very deep ſleep—And which was worſe; when the Lord was thus aſleep there were no Diſciples to awaken him, being themſelves all faſt aſleep. What kind of Cardinal Presbyters and Deacons can we think were choſen by theſe Monſters, when nothing is ſo natural as for every one to propagate his own likeneſs?* It is very much that theſe lewd Women, and their Favourite-Popes, Cardinals, and Biſhops who then ſwayed the Church, ſhould, when they were ſo careleſs of their own Souls, be ſo tender of the ſalvation of Poſterity; and when they adminiſtred all other affairs of the Church ſo extravagantly, ſhould be ſo careful of the *main chance*, as to tranſmit the Chriſtian Doctrine entire and uncorrupted to ſucceeding Ages. Yet Mr. *S.* hath demonſtrated this *à Poſteriori*, which ſeems ſo very ſtrange to a man that conſiders things *à Priori*.

* De Rom. Pontif. L. 4. c. 12.
* Ann. Tom. 10. An. 900.

§. 5. But it may be, this diſmal ſtate of the *Roman* Church laſted but a little while; and ſhe did in the ſame Age, before Tradition could be interrupted, recover her ſelf out of this degenerate condition. I will therefore enquire a little into the ſtate of ſucceeding Times. And I find in the Thirteenth *Century*, St. *Bernard* * complaining, That the degeneracy of the Prieſts was in his days greater then ever; *We cannot* (ſays he) *now ſay, as is the People ſo is the Prieſt; for the People are not ſo bad as their Prieſts.* In the Fifteenth *Century*, *Nic. de Clemangiis*, who lived in that Time, wrote a Book upon this argument, *Of the corrupt ſtate of the Church*; by which we may make ſome judgment whether in that Age it was (as Mr. *S.* ſays) impoſſible but that the Chriſtian Doctrine ſhould be entirely preſerved, and faithfully and diligently taught. He ſays * there was an univerſal degeneracy in the Church, *from the very Head of it to its loweſt Members.* In the ſame *Chapter* he complains, *Who is there that preaches the Goſpel to the People? Who ſhews them the way to Salvation either by Word or action?* It ſeems there was a great failure both of *Oral* and *Practical* Tradition. Again *, ſpeaking of the Pope's taking to himſelf the Collation of all vacant Biſhopricks and Dignities; he ſays, one might think the Pope did this, *that the Church might be provided of worthier Governours, both in reſpect of their Learning, and their lives, did not the thing it ſelf declare the contrary, and that ignorant and uſeleſs Perſons (provided they had money) were by Simony advanced to the higheſt degrees in the Church.* And *, ſpeaking what a vaſt number of Candidates there was uſually at *Rome* from all Parts waiting for Benefices and dignities, he tells us, That many of theſe *did not come from their Studies, or from Schools of Learning, to govern Pariſhes? but from the Plow, and from the meaneſt Profeſſions: and that they underſtand Latin and Arabick much at the ſame rate; and many of them could not read at all. But it may be* (ſays he) *their manners were ſuch as might be ſome* excuſe

* In Converſ. Sancti Pauli Serm. 1.
* C. 3.
* C. 5.
* C. 6.

excuſe for their Ignorance. No; though their Learning was but little, their
Vertue was leſs; for being brought up in Idleneſs, they followed nothing but
Debauchery and Sports, &c. *Hence it comes to paſs, that in all places there*
are ſo many wicked, and wretched, and ignorant Prieſts.—Hence it is that
Prieſts are ſo contemned by the common People.—Formerly the Prieſthood was
highly honoured by the People, and nothing was more venerable than that
Order of men; but now nothing is more vile and deſpicable. —* *I make no* * C. 9.
doubt, but there are now more Thieves and Robbers, than true Paſtours in the
Church. — * *Why ſhould any man now flatter himſelf with hopes of Preferment,* * C. 11.
becauſe of his Vertue or Learning? Men do not: now (as formerly) riſe
in the Church by ſuch Arts—- * *Which of thoſe that are now adays advanced* * C. 13.
to the Pontifical Dignitie, hath ſo much as perfunctorily read, or heard, or
learn't the Scriptures; yea, or ever touched any more than the cover of the
Bible? Again *, ſpeaking of the prodigious Covetouſneſs of the Governours * C. 14.
of the Church, and the groſs neglect of their Flocks, *They would*
(ſays he) *much more contentedly bear the loſs of ten thouſand Souls, than of*
ten or twelve Shillings. But why do I ſay more contentedly? When without the
leaſt trouble or diſturbance to themſelves, they can bear the loſs of Souls; a
thing ſo far from their care, that it never entered into their thoughts, Had
the *Hereticks* of thoſe days but had Wit enough, and a little Money,
they might (it ſeems) for a ſmall Sum have hired the Governours of
the Church to have renounced Tradition, or to have ceaſed to propagate
it; though they had known that in ſo doing they ſhould have damned
all their Poſterity. He goes on, and tells us, *That if there were perhaps*
any one who did not take theſe courſes the reſt would all ſnarle at him, call
him Fool, and ſay he was unfit to be a Prieſt.—So that the ſtudy of the Scriptures
(together with the Profeſſours of it) was turned into laughter and ſcorn
by all; but (which is prodigious) eſpecially by the Popes, who prefer their own
Traditions many degrees before the Commands of God. I deſire Mr. *S.* to
take notice in what kind of times *Tradition* was ſet up againſt Scripture.
Again *, ſpeaking of the choice of perſons to be Prieſts, he tells us, *That* * C. 16.
there was no enquiry made into their Lives, no queſtion about their Manners:
As for their Learning (ſays he) *what need I ſpeak of that? When we ſee the*
Prieſts, almoſt univerſally, have much ado to read, though but in an heſitating
and ſpelling faſhion, drawing out one ſyllable after another, without underſtanding
either the ſenſe of what they read, or the words. I am now reconciled
to *oral Tradition,* and convinced that there was great need of it in thoſe
Ages in which ſcarce any of the Prieſts could either write or read. I
omit the particulars of what he ſays * concerning the *common Drunkenneſs* * C.20,21,23.
and incontinency of Prieſts, who (becauſe they made Conſcience of
Marriage) *kept Whores in their Houſes*; concerning the diſſolute Lives
of *Monks*; and concerning *Nunneries,* which inſtead of being *the Sanctuaries*
of God, were the abominable Stews of Venus, *and the Receptacles of laſcivious*
young men; inſomuch (ſays he) *that at this day it is the ſame thing to*
put a Virgin into a Nunnery, and to make her a common Strumpet. And to
ſhew that he does nor ſpeak theſe things of a few, but with relation to the
general corruption of that Age, he adds *, *That wickedneſs did ſo abound* * C. 25.
in all Orders of men, that ſcarce one among a thouſand was to be found who
did truely live up to his Profeſſion: And if there was any one that did not follow
theſe lewd courſes, he became ridiculous to others, and was branded either
as an inſolent ſingular Mad-man or an Hypocrite. I will conclnde this long
Teſtimony with the character which he gives * of one of the Popes of * C. 27.
his time, *Clement* by name, *viz.* *That he did chiefly apply himſelf to*

gratifie and oblige all the Paraſites and Buffoons that had any intereſt in the ſeveral Courts of Princes : *And to this end, did confer upon theſe, and upon handſome young Boys (which he much delighted in) almoſt all the vacant Biſhopricks, and moſt of the other Church Dignities.* It is well that *oral Tradition* hath the ſecurity of *infallibility*, otherwiſe it had in all *probability* been loſt among this lewd ſort of People, which yet they gravely call the *Holy Roman-Catholick Church*.

§. 6. To this effect I might have produced Teſtimonies concerning every Age from the *Ninth* to the *Sixteenth* ; but Mr. *Creſſy* hath ſaved me that labour, who acknowledges *, that *theſe worſt times of the Church, when Ignorance; Worldlineſs, Pride, Tyranny,* &c. *reigned with ſo much ſcope; When the Popes (ſo wicked, ſo abominable in their Lives) enjoyed ſo unlimited a power even over ſecular Princes themſelves, and much more over the Clergy*: I ſay he acknowledges that theſe *worſt times* continued during the ſpace *of about ſix Ages before* Luther : A competent time (one would think) for Tradition to have miſcarried in, were it not (as Mr. *S.* ſays) *indefectible*. Mr. *Creſſy* indeed tells us *, That this *was to him an irrefragable Teſtimony of a ſtrange watchfulneſs of Divine Providence over the Church, to preſerve it from the Gates of Hell (that is, eſtabliſhed and dangerous Errors) during theſe worſt times.* And very likely it is that this might appear ſo to ſuch a *Catholick whoſe judgment*, he tells us, *it is to renounce his own judgment* : but it will never appear *irrefragable*, to any man that hath his judgment about him, unleſs Mr. *Creſſy* can prove, that by that phraſe, *viz. the Gates of Hell*, the Scripture does not mean groſs wickedneſs of Life, as well as *dangerous errors* in Opinion; and likewiſe, that a general vitiouſneſs and debauchery of Manners is not as pernicious to Chriſtianity, and as deſtructive to the end of it, as *eſtabliſh'd Errors* in Doctrine. And if ſo, that the Providence of God is not equally concerned to preſerve the Church from things equally pernicious. When he hath proved theſe three things, then this Declamatory diſcourſe of his may ſignifie ſomething, but not before.

* Exomolog. C. 68.

* Ibid.

§. 7. Now if this be a true repreſentation of the ſtate of the *Roman* Church in thoſe Ages, was not this a very fit time for the Devil to play his Pranks in? Will any man that reads theſe Teſtimonies, think it impoſſible that the Doctrine of Chriſt ſhould have been depraved in this Age; or that the moſt ſenſleſs and abſurd Tenets might then be brought in under the notion of Chriſtian Doctrines? When ſcarce any one knew what the Doctrine of Chriſt was: When a general ignorance of Letters, and almoſt an univerſal ſtupidity and madneſs had ſeized upon the minds of men: When there was a horrid depravation of manners, and a general failure of Vertue and Piety both in the Head and Members of the Church: When the lives of the Popes were Tragically wicked, and no footſteps of Piety appeared in them: When for about 150 years together, in a continued ſucceſſion of 50 Popes, there was ſcarce one pious and vertuous Man (or Woman) ſate in that Chair: When the *Whores* governed *Rome*, and put out and put in Biſhops at their pleaſure; and made their own *Gallants* Popes, who would be ſure to make a College of Cardinals of ſuch Monſters as themſelves: When *pretty Boys*, and *Paraſits*, and *Buffoons* led the Head of the Church by the Noſe, and were gratified with the Beſt Biſhopricks and Dignities in the Church: When there was a general decay of knowledge, and defection of the Chriſtian Faith:

When in many Countreys neither Sacraments, nor other Eccleſiaſtical Rites were obſerved: When Violence and Fraud, and all the Arts of Deceit and Couzenage, and blacker Arts than theſe, were the common ſtudy and practice: When Intemperance, and all kind of Lewdneſs and Debauchery, reigned in all ſorts and orders of men: When the generality of Biſhops and Prieſts (who, according to Mr. *Ruſhworth* *, can only teach the Traditionary Doctrine) were ignorant in the Scriptures and in every thing elſe (very few of them being able ſo much as to read tolerably) and did neglect to teach the People, and to breed up any in knowledge to ſucceed them in their Office; and in the lewdneſs of their Lives did ſurpaſs the Vileſt of the People. Was not ſuch an Age a fit ſeaſon to plant the Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation* in? Or if any thing more monſtrous than that can be imagined, it might then have taken place; for what Weeds would not have grown in ſo rank a Soil? Doth Mr. *S.* think it impoſſible, that thoſe that were born in the Church then, ſhould be ignorant of the Doctrine of Chriſt, when ſcarce any one would take the pains to teach it them; or that it could then have been altered, when ſo few underſtood, and fewer practiſed it: When prodigious Impiety and Wickedneſs did overſpread the Church, from the Pope down to the meaneſt of the Laity, can any one believe that men generally made Conſcience to inſtruct their Children in the true Faith of Chriſt? Was it impoſſible there ſhould be any neglect of this Duty, when all others failed? That there ſhould be any miſtake about the Doctrine of Chriſt, when there was ſo much Ignorance? unleſs he be of Mr. *Ruſhworth*'s * mind, who reckons *Ignorance* among *the Parents of Religion*. Where were then the *Arguments of Hope and Fear*? Were they *ſtrongly applied*, or were they not? Were they *cauſes of actual will* in Chriſtians to believe well, when they lived ſo ill? Or is Chriſtianity only fitted to form mens minds to a right belief, but of no efficacy to govern their Lives? Hath Chriſt taken care to keep his Church from Error, but not from Vice? As the great Cardinal *Perron* * (ſtooping below his own Wit and Reaſon to ſerve a bad Cauſe) tells us, *That the Church ſings, and will ſing to the end of the World, I am black, but I am fair; that is to ſay, I am black in Manners, but fair in Doctrine*: As if the meaning of the Prophecies and Promiſes of Scripture made to the Church were this, that by the extraordinary care of God's Providence, and peculiar aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit, ſhe ſhould be wicked, but Orthodox to the end of the World. Where were then the *vigorous cauſes imprinting* Chriſt's Doctrine, and continuing it more particularly at *Rome* than any where elſe; and of ſecuring that *See* and its *ſupreme Paſtor* in the faith and practice of the Chriſtian Doctrine, above any other See or Paſtor whatſoever? Who is ſo little verſed in Hiſtory, as not to underſtand the diſmal ſtate of Religion in the *Romiſh* Church, in thoſe times? Who does not know what advantages the Biſhops of *Rome*, and their ſervile Clergy made of the Ignorance and Superſtition of thoſe and the ſucceeding Ages; and by what Arts and Steps they raiſed themſelves to that power which they held in the Church for a long while after? When they could tread upon the Necks of Princes; and make a great King walk bare-foot, and yield himſelf to be ſcourged by a company of petulant Monks: When they could ſend any man upon an Errand to viſit the Holy Sepulchre, or the Shrine of ſuch a Saint; and command five or ſix Kings with great Armies upon a needleſs Expedition into the Holy Land, that ſo during

* Dial. 3. Sect. 3.

* Dial. 3. Sect. 7.

* Reply to K. *James*. L. 4. C. 6.

their abſence they might play their own Game the better: When they could mint Miracles, and impoſe upon the belief of the People (without the Authority of any ancient Books) abſurd and counterfeit Tales of ancient Saints and Martyrs, as delivered down to them by *Tradition*; and could bring that foppiſh Book the *Legend*, almoſt into equal Authority and Veneration with the *Bible*; and perſwade the eaſie people that *Denys* carried his own head in his hand after it was cut off two Miles, and kiſs'd it when he laid it down. Any one that ſhall but reflect upon the monſtrous practices of the *Roman* Biſhops and Clergy in theſe Ages, the ſtrange Feats they played, and what abſurdities they impoſed upon the ſuperſtitious credulity of Princes and People, may readily imagine not only the poſſibility, but the eaſineſs of innovating new Doctrines as they pleaſed, under the ſpecious pretences of Antiquity, and conſtant and uninterrupted Tradition.

§. 8. And this kind of Diſcourſe concerning the poſſibility of Errors coming into the Church, is not, as Mr. *White* ridiculouſly compares it *, as if an *Orator* ſhould go about to perſwade people, that *George, by the help of a long ſtaff and a* nimble *caſt of his body*, and ſuch like advantages, *might leap over* Paul's *Steeple*; *never conſidering all the while the diſproportion of all theſe advantages to the height of the Steeple*: *ſo* (ſaith he) *he that diſcourſeth at large how Errors uſe to ſlide into Man's Life, without comparing the power of the cauſes of Error to the ſtrength of reſiſting, which conſiſts in this Principle, Nothing is to be admitted but what deſcends by Tradition*, &c. *ſays no more towards proving an Error's over-running the Church, than the Orator for* George's *leaping over the Steeple*. How vain is this? When it appears, from this Inſtance that I have given of the ſtate of the *Roman* Church, in the *Ninth* and *Tenth* Centuries, and afterwards; that the cauſes of Error were infinitely ſtronger than the power of reſiſtance. The great cauſes of Error are *Ignorance* and *Vice*; where *Ignorance* reigns, there's no *Power*; where *Vice*, no *Will* to reſiſt it. And how great the Ignorance and Vitiouſneſs of all Orders of Men in the *Roman* Church was, is too too apparent from the Teſtimonies I have brought. Where was the ſtrength of reſiſting Error, when for 150 Years together the Popes were the vileſt of Men, Biſhops and Prieſts overwhelmed with Ignorance, abandoned to all manner of Vice, and moſt ſupinely negligent in inſtructing the People? In ſuch a degenerate ſtate of a Church, what ſtrength is there in this Principle, *Nothing is to be admitted but what deſcends by Tradition*? When thoſe, who ought to teach Men what that Doctrine is which was derived to them by Tradition, are generally careleſs of their Duty, and ignorant themſelves what that Doctrine is; When they addict themſelves wholly to the ſatisfying of their Ambition, and other Luſts, and carry on deſigns of Gain, and getting Dominion over the People. What can hinder men ſo diſpoſed from corrupting the Doctrine of Chriſt, and ſuiting it to their own Luſts and Intereſts? And what ſhall hinder the People from embracing thoſe Corruptions? when by the negligence of their Paſtors to inſtruct them, and not only ſo, but alſo by their being deprived of the Scriptures in a known Tongue, they are become utterly incapable of knowing what the true Doctrine of Chriſt is. So that in an Age of ſuch profound Ignorance and Vice, and general neglect of Inſtruction 'tis ſo far from being impoſſible for Errors to over-run a Church, that the contrary is morally impoſſible; and George's *long ſtaff* and advantageous *caſt*

of

* Apology for Tradition, p. 49.

of his Body are more powerful cauſes to enable him to leap over *Paul's* Steeple, than this Principle, *That nothing is to be admitted, but what deſcends by Tradition,* is to keep Errors out of a Church in an Ignorant and Vitious Age; when few or none are either able or willing to inſtruct Men in the Truth. For ſuppoſe this always to have been the Principle of Chriſtians, *viz. That nothing is to be admitted as the Doctrine of Chriſt, but what is deſcended to them by Tradition :* How ſhall this Principle ſecure the Church from Hereſie, any more than this, *viz. That nothing but Truth is to be aſſented to,* doth ſecure men from Error? Or more than this, *viz. That no man is to do any thing but what is wiſe and vertuous,* does ſecure the generality of Mankind from Folly and Vice?

SECT. VIII.

The ſecond Anſwer to his ſecond Demonſtration.

§. 1. SEcondly, The *Principles* upon which this Demonſtration relies are not ſufficiently proved by him.

His *firſt* Principle is this, *That Age, which holds her Faith delivered thus from the Apoſtles, neither can it ſelf have changed any thing in it, nor know or doubt that any Age ſince the Apoſtles had changed or innovated any thing therein. This Propoſition* (he tells us) *needs no proof to evidence it, but only an Explication. For ſince no man can hold contrary to his knowledge, or doubt of what he holds, nor change or innovate in the caſe propoſed without knowing he did ſo; 'tis a manifeſt impoſſibility a whole Age ſhould fall into an abſurdity ſo inconſiſtent with the nature of one ſingle man.* But (by his favour) that which he ſays is no *proof,* but only an *Explication,* is a *proof* if it be any thing; and the force of it this; That which is *inconſiſtent with the nature of one ſingle man, is manifeſtly impoſſible to a whole Age;* but it is inconſiſtent with the nature of any ſingle man *to hold contrary to his knowledge, &c.* therefore impoſſible to a whole Age; and conſequently, *that Age which holds her Faith delivered thus from the Apoſtles, neither can it ſelf have changed any thing, nor, &c.* So that in order to the making good of this *firſt Principle,* Mr. *S.* hath left nothing unproved but onely this Propoſition, *namely,* That it is impoſſible that any one ſingle man that holds his Faith to have been delivered uninterruptedly from the Apoſtles, ſhould ever himſelf have changed any thing in it, or know or doubt that any Age ſince the Apoſtles hath changed or innovated any thing therein: And to make out the truth of this Propoſition, there only remains this to be proved, *viz.* That it is impoſſible for any ſingle man to be miſtaken. For if that be poſſible, then contrary to Mr. *S.* a man may hold that to have been delivered as a Doctrine of Faith from the Apoſtles which was not ſo delivered.

§ 2. His *ſecond Principle* is this, *That no Age could innovate any thing and withal deliver that very thing to poſterity as received from Chriſt by continual Succeſſion.* He proves it thus; *Since man is a rational Creature, he muſt have ſome Reaſon or Motive, good or bad, which he propoſeth to himſelf as an end to be atchieved by his action : And whatever his remote end is, his immediate end, in telling poſterity a late invented thing was held immediately before, is to make them believe it. Wherefore ſince a ſeen impoſſibility cannot be a Motive to one not frantick; and ſince tis evidently impoſſible they ſhould make poſterity believe a thing ſo univerſally known to be falſe, as this muſt needs be,* &c. *it is as impoſſible this Principle ſhould faulter, as that the foregoing Age ſhould conſpire to act without a motive, or that the ſucceeding Age*

Age ſhould believe what they know to be otherwiſe, that is, ſhould hold both ſides of a Contradiction in a clear matter of Fact. The force of which is this, That it is impoſſible that any man not frantick ſhould attempt to innovate in matter of Chriſtian Doctrine, becauſe the immediate end of ſuch an attempt muſt be to have his new Doctrine believed; but it is impoſſible he ſhould attain this end, and impoſſible he ſhould not ſee that it is impoſſible to attain it: Now a ſeen impoſſibility is an end that cannot move any one that is not frantick; therefore no man that is not frantick, can attempt to innovate in matter of Chriſtian Doctrine. Thus he hath demonſtrated it impoſſible that there ſhould be any Hereticks, if a Heretick be one that attempts to innovate in matter of Chriſtian Doctrine. For if there be any ſuch attempters they muſt be frantick, and if they be frantick they can be no Hereticks; for Hereſie implies a Crime, but God will not impute the actions of mad men to them as faults. Again, ſuppoſe he that attempts to innovate be miſtaken (and I hope Mr. *S.* will grant that a Heretick is fallible) and think that which he delivers as Chriſt's Doctrine to be really ſo, though indeed it be not; why ſhould ſuch a Perſon think it impoſſible to make men believe that to be received from Chriſt which he really thinks was received, and thinks he can make it appear that it was ſo? And if this be granted, then it is not impoſſible that *Man, though he be a rational Creature,* may attempt to innovate. And if ſo, then his *ſecond Principle* is not proved. If Mr. *S.* had any regard to *the noble Science of Controverſie* (whereof he pretends to be ſo great a Maſter) he would not bring ſuch trifling Sophiſms inſtead of demonſtrative Proofs: And nothing leſs than a demonſtrative Proof will ſerve to eſtabliſh any Principle upon which a Demonſtration is to be built.

SECT. IX.

The third Anſwer to Mr. *S*'s ſecond Demonſtration.

§. 1. DOctrines and Practices which muſt be acknowledged to have been innovated, have made the ſame pretence to uninterrupted Tradition. And of this I ſhall give ſeveral Inſtances; one among the *Jews,* the reſt among *Chriſtians.*

1. I ſhall inſtance among the *Traditionary Jews,* whoſe perſwaſion in our Saviour's time was, and ſtill is, that their Oral Doctrine, which they call their *Cabala,* hath deſcended to them from *Moſes* uninterruptedly. Now here is the *exiſtence of ſuch a perſwaſion,* as Mr. *S.* affirms to be *impoſſible without Traditions ever-indeficiency to beget it.* And this perſwaſion of theirs is moſt exactly parallel with the pretenſions of the *Romiſh* Church according to Mr. *S.* For here's a multitude of Traditionary *Jews,* manifoldly greater in proportion to the Diſſenters in that Church, than the *Romiſh* Church is in compariſon to thoſe Chriſtians that diſſent from Her. *Joſephus* tells us*, That *the richer ſort were of the perſwaſion of the Sadduces, but the multitude were on the Phariſees ſide.* So that the *Phariſees* had this mark of the true Church (as *Bellarmine* calls it) common to them with the Church of *Rome,* that they were the greateſt number, and ſo they continue to this very day; inſomuch that although they do not call themſelves the *Catholicks,* yet I am ſure they call all *Jews* that do diſſent from them *Schiſmaticks.* Now that the *Sadduces* were for the written Law againſt Oral Tradition, is I confeſs no credit to us, but that our *Saviour* reproved the Traditionary Doctrines and Practices of the *Phariſees,* becauſe by them they made void the

* Antiq. Jud. l. 13. c. 18.

the written Law, is much more the diſcredit of the Aſſerters of Oral Tradition. Both *Romaniſts* and *Phariſees* they own alike a *written Doctrine*, but then they both pretend the true ſenſe and explication thereof to have deſcended to them by *Oral Tradition*. For juſt as the Traditionary *Chriſtians* do now, ſo *Joſephus* tells * us the Traditionary *Jews* of old, the *Phariſees*, did pretend by their Oral Tradition *to interpret the Law more accurately and exactly* than any other Sect. In like manner *he* * tells us, That *all things, that belonged to Prayer and Divine Worſhip, were regulated and adminiſtred according to their interpretations* of the Law. And they both agree in this, to make void the *Word of God by their Tradition*; which the *Phariſees* did no otherwiſe than Mr. *S.* does, by equalling *Oral Tradition* to *Scripture*; nay preferring it above *Scripture*, in making it the ſole Rule of Faith, and interpreting the Scripture according to it. Hence are thoſe common ſayings in the *Talmud*, and other Jewiſh Books; *Do not think that the written Law is the foundation, but that the Law Orally delivered is the right foundation*; which is to ſay with Mr. *S.* that not the Scripture, but *Oral Tradition* is the true *Rule of Faith*. Again, *There is more in the words of the Scribes* (*viz.* the Teſtifiers of Tradition) *than in the words of the written Law*. Again, *The Oral Law excells the Written, as much as the Soul doth the Body*; which accords very well with what Mr. *S.* frequently tells us, That the Scripture without Tradition is but a dead Letter, deſtitute of life and ſenſe. Hence alſo it is that they required the People (as the Traditionary Church does now) to yield up themſelves to the dictates of Tradition even in the moſt abſurd things, as appears by that common ſaying among them, *If the Scribes ſay that the right hand is the left, and the left the right* (that Bread is Fleſh, and Wine is Bloud) *hearken to them*, that is, make no ſcruple of whatſoever they deliver as Tradition, though never ſo contrary to Reaſon or Senſe. And laſtly, The Doctrines of the *Phariſees* were many of them *practical*; ſuch were all thoſe which concerned external rites and obſervances, as *waſhing of hands and cups*, &c. So that theſe *Phariſaical* Traditions had alſo that *unſpeakable* advantage which Mr. *S.* ſays renders their Traditions *unmiſtakeable*, That they were daily practiſed, and came down *clad in ſuch plain matters of Fact, that the moſt ſtupid man living could not poſſibly be ignorant of them.* Therefore, according to Mr. *S*'s Principles, it was impoſſible that any Age of the *Jews* ſhould be perſwaded that theſe things were commanded by *Moſes* and ever ſince obſerved, if they had not been ſo: And yet our *Saviour* denies theſe Cuſtoms to have been of any ſuch Authority as they pretended.

* Ibid. l. 17. c. 3. & de Bell. Jud. l. 1. c. 4. & l. 2. c. 12.

* Antiq. l. 18. c. 2.

§. 2. But I needed not to have taken all this pains to ſhew the agreement which is between the Traditionary *Jews* and *Papiſts*, their own Writers ſo liberally acknowledging it. Mr. *White* * indeed ſays, That *the Faith of the Jews was not delivered to them Orally, but by Writing*; than which nothing can be more inconſiſtent with his *Hypotheſis*. For if the *Jewiſh Faith* was conveyed to them not *Orally*, but by *Writing*, then either the *Jewiſh* Church had no ſufficient *Rule of Faith*, or elſe a Writing may be ſuch a Rule. But other of their *Champions* make great uſe of the Parallel, between the Traditionary *Jews* and the *Romiſh* Church, to confirm from thence their own Traditionary Doctrines. Cardinal *Perron* hath a full paſſage to this purpoſe; *As this* (ſays he *) *is to preſerve a ſound and entire reſpect to the Majeſty of the ancient Moſaick Scripture, to believe and obſerve not onely all the things which are therein actually contained,*

* De Fid. & Theol. Tract. 1. Sect. 6.

* Rep. to K. *James*, obſerv. 3. c. 4.

but alſo thoſe things which are therein contained mediately and relatively, as the Doctrines of Paradiſe, &c. *which were not contained therein but mediately, and by the authority which it gave to the depoſition of the Patriarchal and Moſaick Tradition, preſerved by heart, and in the Oral Doctrine of the Synagogue: So this is to preſerve a ſound and entire reſpect to the Majeſty of the Apoſtolical Scripture, to believe and obſerve all the things which it contains, not onely immediately and by it ſelf, but mediately and by reference to the Apoſtolical Traditions, to which in groſs and generally it gives the Authority of Apoſtolical Doctrines, and to the Church the Authority of Guardian and Depoſitary to preſerve and atteſt them. Voyſin* in this *Obſervations* upon *Raymundus Martyn,* * tells us, *That as in the Old Law the great Conſiſtory at* Jeruſalem *was the foundation of the true Tradition, ſo* (ſays he) *the See of* Rome *is the foundation of our Tradition. And as the continual ſucceſſion of the High Prieſts and Fathers among the Jews was the great confirmation of the Truth of their Traditions, ſo* (ſays he) *with us the Truth of our Catholick Doctrine is confirmed by a continual ſucceſſion of Popes.*

* Pugio Fid. p. 145.

§. 3. From all this it appears, that the *Phariſees* among the *Jews* made the ſame pretence to *Oral Tradition* which the *Papiſts* do at this day according to Mr. *S.* And if ſo, then Mr. *S*'s Demonſtration *à Poſteriori* is every whit as ſtrong for the *Jews* againſt our *Saviour*, as it is for the *Papiſt* againſt the *Proteſtants*. For we find that in our *Saviour*'s time, it was then *the preſent perſwaſion of the Traditionary* Jews, *that their Faith*, and their Rites, and the true ſenſe and interpretation of their written Law was *deſcended from* Moſes *and the* Prophets *to them uninterruptedly*; *which we find was moſt firmly rooted in their hearts.* But the *Jews* had conſtant Tradition among them, that the Meſſiah was to be a great temporal Prince: And though the Letters of the Prophecies concerning him, might well enough have been accommodated to the low and ſuffering condition of our Saviour; yet they did *Infallibly* know that their Meſſiah was to be another kind of perſon.) from *ſenſe written in their hearts*, from the interpretation of thoſe Prophecies Orally brought down to them *from the Patriarchal and Moſaick Tradition preſerved by heart and in the Oral Doctrine of the Synagogue, and from the living voice of* their *Church eſſential*, that is, the univerſal conſent of the then Traditionary *Jews*. If it be ſaid, That the Jewiſh Tradition did indeed bring down ſeveral Doctrines not contained in Scripture, of *Paradiſe*, of *Hell*, of the *laſt Judgement*, of *the Reſurrection*, &c. (as Cardinal *Perron* affirms) but it did not bring down this *Point of the Meſſiah's being a Temporal Prince*: Then as Mr. *S.* * asks us, ſo the *Jew* does him; *By what virtue Tradition brought down theſe other Points? and whether the ſame virtue were not powerful to bring down* this *as well as thoſe*? Then he will ask him farther, *Is there not a neceſſary connexion and relation between a conſtant Cauſe, and its formal Effect? So that if its formal Effect be Points received as delivered ever, the proper Cauſe muſt be an ever-delivery; whence he will argue from ſuch an Effect to its Cauſe for any particular Point, and conſequently for* this *Point that is in Controverſie between* Jews and Chriſtians, concerning the Meſſiah's being a Temporal Prince, *in caſe it be a Point held ever delivered*; but moſt certain it is, it was ſo held by the *Jews* in our Saviour's time, and hath been held ſo ever ſince to this day.

* p. 76.

I ſhall not trouble the *Reader* with tranſcribing the reſt of this Demonſtration, onely deſire him as he reads it over, to imagine inſtead of Mr.

S.

Mr. *S.* a *Phariſee*, demonſtrating againſt one of *Chriſt*'s Diſciples the Infallibility of the *Oral Tradition* of the *Jews* : And I doubt not but he will find this *Demonſtration*, and every part of it (changing only the Names) as forcibly concluding *Chriſt* not to be the *Meſſiah*, as it doth infer any point of *Popery* againſt the *Proteſtants*.

§. 4. Before I leave this *Inſtance* of the *Jewiſh Tradition*, I ſhall briefly conſider what Mr. *White* * hath offered by way of anſwer to it; as, * Apol. 123. &c. *Firſt*, That the *matter* of theſe Traditions is nothing elſe but *Explications of Scripture framed and invented by their own Rabbines*, So *we* ſay, that the Popiſh Traditions are Innovations. But then Mr. *White*, and Mr. *S.* tell us, That they can demonſtrate them to be deſcended from *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, becauſe it is the preſent Perſwaſion of a multitude of Chriſtians that they are ſo deſcended. In like manner, if this Demonſtration be good, the *Jews* can prove their Traditions to be deſcended from *Moſes* and the *Prophets*. *Secondly*, He ſays, that the *form of theſe Traditions is more ridiculous than the Canting of Gypſies, or the jugling of Hocus-pocus, becauſe it conſiſts in inventing the ſenſe of the Scripture from the myſteries, and numbers, and changes of Letters.* This is a groſs inexcuſable miſtake. For though the *Jews* have ſuch a *Cabala* (called *Gematry*) as this which Mr. *White* deſcribes; yet that *Cabala* which is argued in this *Inſtance*, and which our Saviour reproves in the *Phariſees* by the name of Tradition, is quite another thing, and among the Jewiſh Writers known by the name of the *Unwritten or Oral Law*; which they ſay was delivered to *Moſes* on Mount *Sinai* and by him conveyed to *Aaron* and *Joſhua*, and the *Elders*, and ſucceſſively delivered down from one Age to another; and at laſt by *Rabbi Jehuda* compiled into one Volume, which they call *Miſhna*, or δευτέρωσις. And this does not conſiſt in the Art of Numbring, Combining, or changing of Letters, as Mr. *White* imagines. But ſuppoſe it did ſo, and were more ridiculous than he conceits it to be; the *Inſtance* would be ſo much the more concluſive againſt them, if what they affirm be true, That *Oral Tradition* is infallible, and that the perſwaſion of a Traditionary Church in any Age, that ſuch a Doctrine deſcended to them from *Chriſt* or *Moſes*, be a demonſtration that it did ſo: For if this be ſufficient evidence, 'tis nothing to the purpoſe what the Doctrine be either for *matter* or *form*: For if it be once demonſtrated to have come from *Chriſt* or *Moſes*, it is without any farther diſpute to be received as of Divine authority. So that Mr. *White* quite alters the ſtate of the queſtion; which was not whether the Jewiſh *Cabala* be abſurd and ridiculous, but whether the general perſwaſion of the *Jews* in any Age, that it deſcended to them by uninterrupted Tradition from *Moſes*, be a demonſtration that it did ſo. If it be then the Jewiſh *Cabala* is as demonſtratively of Divine Authority as the Oral Doctrine of the Papiſts. *Thirdly*, He ſays, *This Cabala was a Doctrine delivered to few, and that with ſtrict charge to keep it from Publicity, and ſo communicate it again ſucceſſively to a ſelect Committee of a few; wherein* (ſays he) *you may ſee as fair an opportunity for jugling and couzenage, as in our caſe there is an impoſſiblity.* This I think is true of the *Cabala* which (it ſeems) Mr. *White* had onely in his view, but is a horrible miſtake if he ſpeak of the Oral Law which was contained in the *Miſhna* and which this *Inſtance* onely intends. For of this *Maimonides* * ſays expreſly, *That in every Age, from the time of* Moſes * In Præfat. *to* Rabbi Jehudah, *who compiled the* Miſhna, *the Oral Law was publickly taught*: Sum. Talmud.

And that after Rabbi Jehudah *had compiled it into one volume, the Iſraelites did generally write out Copies of it, and it was every where carefully taught, for fear leſt the Oral Law ſhould by forgetfulneſs be loſt among the Jews.* So that upon account of the publickneſs of the Doctrine, there is as *great an impoſſibility of Jugling and Couzenage in the caſe* of the *Jewiſh* as of the *Romiſh* Tradition. Beſides, was *waſhing of Hands and Cups*, which they alſo pretended to have come down to them from *Moſes*, and to have been conſtantly practiſed in every Age, a ſecret thing? Was not a *practical* Tradition, and performed in a ſenſible matter? If therefore no Age can conſpire to impoſe upon the next in a plain cuſtome; and if an univerſal Tradition of ſuch a thing cannot come in without ſuch a conſpiracy: How could this be the perſwaſion of any Age, that *waſhing of Hands*, &c. was preſcribed by *Moſes* and practiſed in all Ages, if it had not ttuely been ſo?

§. 5. *Secondly*, As for *Inſtances* among *Chriſtians*, whereof many remain yet upon Record; as namely, the various and oppoſite Traditions about the *time of Eaſter*, and concerning thc *Baptiſm of Hereticks*; and the Apoſtolical Tradition (as St. *Auſtin* calls it) concerning *the admiſſion of Infants to the Communion*; all which have been frequently urged in this Controverſie, and none of them yet ſufficiently anſwered; I ſhall to avoid tediousneſs, paſſing by theſe, inſiſt onely upon that of the *Chialiſts*; which in *Juſtin Martyrs* time was the perſwaſion of all Orthodox Chriſtians, that is (in Mr. *S*'s Dialect) of all the *holders to Tradition*. For if notwithſtanding the perſwaſion of that Age, that this Doctrine was deſcended to them from the Apoſtles, it was not really ſo deſcended; then the perſwaſion of Chriſtians in any Age, that a Doctrine was brought down to them from the Apoſtles, is no Demonſtration that it was ſo.

* Apol. p. 68, 79, &c.

§. 6. To this *Inſtance* Mr. *White* anſwers * by telling us, that *Euſebius* ſays that this Tradition ſprang from *Papias* (*a good but a credulous and ſimple man*) who it ſeems was miſtaken in ſaying that it was the Apoſtles Doctrine. But for all this, *Juſtin Martyr* ſays he was received by all *Orthodox Chriſtians* in his Time, as a Doctrine deſcended to them from the Apoſtles. And if *Juſtin* ſaid true, nothing can make more againſt their Demonſtration of the Infallibility of Tradition, than the natural conſequence from theſe two ſayings of *Euſebius* and *Juſtin*, which is this, That the miſtake of one ſimple and credulous man may in an Age or two give occaſion to the univerſal entertainment of a Doctrine, as deſcended down to them from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, when there was no ſuch matter. Hath not Mr. *White* now done his *Rule of Faith* great ſervice by this Anſwer? But it is according to his manner in all his Writings, to ſay any thing to remove a preſent Objection, though never ſo much to the prejudice of his main *Hypotheſis*; than which I do not know any quality in a *Writer* which doth more certainly betray the want either of judgment, or of ſincerity, or of a good Cauſe.

* Apol. p. 81.

§. 7. And whereas he ſays *, *That* Irenæus *his teſtimony proves it to be no Tradition; for he ſets down the ſuppoſed words of our Saviour, which plainly ſhews it is a ſtory, not a Tradition; a Tradition being a ſenſe delivered not in ſet words, but ſetled in the Auditors hearts by hundreds of different*

different expreſſions explicating the ſame meaning. When I conſider this paſſage of Mr. *White*, I confeſs I cannot complement him, and ſay (as he makes his *Nephew* do in the *Dialogue* * between them) *I cannot but applaud your Diſcourſe, it hath ſo pleaſing and attractive a countenance.* And again *, *I am not able to oppoſe what you ſay by any weighty Objection, your Arguments being not only ſtrong and nervous, but of ſo comely and winning a complexion*, &c. I cannot (I ſay) ſpeak all this of his preſent Argument. But I may deſervedly apply to it the laſt part of his *Nephew*'s Complement, That it is an Argument ſo framed, *as if without any evidence of its conſequence it would perſwade men to believe it.* But to return an Anſwer to this paſſage : It ſeems (according to Mr. *White*) that *Irenæus* was miſtaken in the very nature of Tradition : and if ſo learned a *Father* was ignorant in the common *Rule of Faith*, *what can we* (to uſe Mr. *S*'s words *) *undertakingly promiſe to weaker heads*? Mr. *S.* inſtanceth in the *Creed*, and *Ten Commandments*, as the principal Traditions which Parents teach their Children ; but now Mr. *White* can ſhew plainly that theſe are no *Traditions* but *Stories*, becauſe *Tradition is a ſenſe delivered not in ſet words*, &c. As if Chriſt and his Apoſtles could deliver no Doctrine unleſs they expreſſed the ſame thing an hundred ſeveral ways. But ſuppoſe they did ſo (which no man hath any reaſon to imagine, becauſe a thing may be expreſſed as plainly by one way as by an hundred) can no man deliver this Tradition who ſpeaks it in any one of thoſe expreſſions? If one ſhould employ his Servant to carry a Meſſage, and (becauſe Mr. *White* thinks this neceſſary) ſhould ſettle the meaning of it in his heart, by telling him the ſame thing in an hundred ſeveral expreſſions ; and the Servant ſhould go and deliver this Meſſage in one of thoſe very expreſſions that his Maſter uſed to him, and ſhould ſay theſe were his Maſters very words ; would not this be well enough?

No, if he had come to ſuch a Philoſopher as Mr. *White*, he would ſoon have given him to underſtand that he was not fit to bring a Meſſage, or to be credited in it, who had ſo little wit as not to know that a Meſſage is a thing not to be delivered *in ſet-words.* And now I would entreat Mr. *White* to reconcile himſelf in this matter to his Friends. Mr. *Ruſhworth* ſays *, *'Tis impoſſible to put fully and beyond all quarrel the ſame ſenſe in divers words* : Which if it be true, I would fain know what certain courſe Mr. *White* can preſcribe *to explicate the ſame meaning by hundreds of different expreſſions*, and conſequently how Tradition can be infallibly conveyed *by ſetling the ſenſe of it in the Auditors hearts* by ſuch variety of expreſſions. Mr. *Creſſy* * likewiſe (a zealous Aſſertor of Tradition) does affirm, *That the Primitive Churches were even to exceſs ſcrupulous in maintaining the very phraſes of Traditionary Doctrines* ; which (according to Mr. *White*) *plainly ſhews* theſe Doctrines *to be ſtories, not Traditions, becauſe Tradition is a ſenſe delivered not in ſet-words.* The ſame *Author* complains, * *That few among their learnedſt Maſters of Controverſie, propoſe the Points to be diſputed between them and the Proteſtants, in the Language of the Church.* By which I ſuppoſe he does not mean, that theſe Controvertiſts were to blame in that they did not *ſettle the ſenſe of theſe Points by hundreds of different expreſſions explicating* the ſame meaning, but that they did not keep to the words wherein the Church had in Councils or otherwiſe (if there be any other way) declared her ſenſe of thoſe Points. Again *he* * ſays, That *St.* Paul, *referring to the Doctrine*

* *Ruſhworth* Dial. 4. Sect. 4.
* Ibid. Sect. 5.
* P. 39.
* Dial. 1. Sect. 6.
* Exomolog. c. 10. Sect. 4.
* Ibid. c. 19. Sect. 2.
* Ibid. c. 27. Sect. 2.

ſettled by Oral Inſtruction, to ſhew the uniformity of it every where, calls it a form of wholſome words. From whence we may conclude either that St. *Paul* did not well to call the Traditionary Doctrine (as Mr. *Creſſy* ſays he does) *a form of words*, or elſe (which is more probable) that Mr. *White* is miſtaken in ſaying, That *a Tradition is a ſenſe not delivered in ſet-words.* Farthermore, the ſame Mr. *Creſſy* * tells us, That St. *Auguſtine* was careful *not only to deliver Traditional Truths themſelves, but the terms alſo in which thoſe Truths were conveyed to his Times.* But now Mr. *White* could have informed St. *Auguſtin*, that this officious care of his was not only ſuperfluous, but pernicious to Tradition.

§. 8. But to return to *Juſtin*'s Teſtimony; to which the Sum of Mr. *White*'s anſwer is, That *Juſtin eſteem'd it not as a point neceſſary to ſalvation; but rather a piece of Learning higher than the common: Since he both acknowledges other Catholicks held the contrary, and entitles thoſe of his perſwaſion* κατὰ πάντα ὀρθογνώμονες *right in all opinions*, that is, *wholly of his own mind.* It is not material to my purpoſe, whether or no *Juſtin* look'd upon this *as a point neceſſary to Salvation*, ſo long as it is evident that he looked upon it as a Divine Revelation and part of the Chriſtian Doctrine. And yet it ſeems he thought it a point of more than ordinary importance, becauſe he joyns it with the Doctrine of the *Reſurrection*, and ſays that it was not diſowned by any but thoſe who alſo denied the Reſurrection. But whereas Mr. *White* ſays that *Juſtin acknowledges other Catholicks to have held the contrary*, I hope to make it evident from the ſcope and *ſeries* of his Diſcourſe, that he acknowledges no ſuch thing; but that the plain deſign of his Diſcourſe, is to ſhow that this Doctrine was owned by all true Chriſtians. For when *Trypho* asks him *, Whether the Chriſtians did indeed believe that *Jeruſalem ſhould be rebuilt*, &c. He returns him this anſwer, *I am not ſuch a Wretch as to ſpeak otherwiſe than I think. I have told thee before that my ſelf and many others (as ye all know) are of the mind that this will come to paſs. But, not many indeed of thoſe Chriſtians who, are* [not] *of the pure and pious perſwaſion, do not own this, I have intimated to thee.* That the negative particle (though omitted in the Copy) ought to be thus inſerted, will be clear to any one that conſiders what follows. For after he had ſpoken of thoſe who diſown this Doctrine, he immediately adds by way of farther deſcription of them, that though they are called Chriſtians yet in Truth they are not Chriſtians, in theſe words; *For of theſe* (*viz.* the Diſowners of this Doctrine) *who are called indeed Chriſtians, but are Atheiſtical and Impious Hereticks, I have ſhewed thee that they teach in all Points Blaſphemous, Atheiſtical and Abſurd things. But that ye may know that I do not ſay this for you only; I will, according to my ability, compile all theſe Diſcourſes which have paſt between us into one piece; in which I will by Writing make Profeſſion of this very thing which I now declare to you. For I do not chooſe to follow men or the Doctrines of men, but God and ſuch Doctrines as are from him. And though ye may have converſed with ſome who are called Chriſtians, and yet do not acknowledge this; but even dare to blaſpheme the God of* Abraham, *and the God of* Iſaac, *and the God of* Jacob; *who alſo ſay that there is no Reſurrection of the dead, but that ſo ſoon as they dye their Souls are received into Heaven: Do not count theſe men Chriſtians; no more than a man, that conſiders things rightly, would own the Sadduces and ſuch like Sects to be Jews,* &c. *But I my ſelf, and as many Chriſtians as are throughly of the right perſwaſion, do both know that there ſhall*

* Ibid. c. 28. Sect. 1.

* Dial. cum *Tryph.* p. 306. Edit. Lutet. 1615.

ſhall be a Reſurrection of the fleſh, and a thouſand years in Jeruſalem *which ſhall be built, adorned and enlarged,* &c. Can any thing be plainer than that *Juſtin* endeavours by this Diſcourſe to ſatisfie *Trypho,* that this *Point* they were ſpeaking of was a *Divine Doctrine,* and owned to be ſo by all Chriſtians; except ſuch as did only bear the Name and Title of Chriſtians, but were indeed blaſphemous Hereticks and deniers of the Reſurrection? By which Character that he intends to deſcribe the impious Sects of the *Gnoſticks,* will appear by and by. So that Mr. *White* muſt either allow the inſerting of the *negative Particle* (which Mr. *Mede* * proves to have been omitted in the Copy) or elſe acknowledge that thoſe who are *Chriſtians only in Name, but in Truth are impious blaſphemous and abſurd Hereticks,* may properly be ſaid to be of the pure and pious Opinion of the Chriſtians. And if only theſe be the *other Catholicks,* whom Mr. *White* ſays *Juſtin acknowledges* to have *held contrary* to the *Millenaries.* I am contented he ſhould make his beſt of them. If Mr. *White* ſhould blame the inſerting of the *negative Particle* [*not*] into *Juſtin's* Text, as too great a boldneſs with the *Fathers*; it were eaſily anſwered, that the ſenſe evidently requires it. And in ſuch a caſe it is no boldneſs, but ſuch a liberty as the moſt Learned of their own Interpreters and Commentators upon the Fathers do frequently take. And for Mr. *S.* if he takes offence at this, one may with reaſon (ſince the exigency of the ſenſe plainly requires the inſerting of it) demand of him (what he * unreaſonably does of us in relation to all the *affirmative Propoſitions of Scripture) to demonſtrate that the Particle* [not] *was not left out* of this Clauſe of *Juſtin*; by thoſe who Tranſcribed the Book. But beſides the exigency of the ſenſe in this place; that the *negative* ought to have been inſerted, will appear by the reference which *Juſtin* makes in this *paſſage* to ſomething foregoing in the ſame *Dialogue. I have* (ſays he) *declared to thee before, that myſelf and many others are of the mind that this will come to paſs. But, that many indeed of thoſe Chriſtians, who are* [not] *of the pure and pious perſwaſion, do not own this, I have intimated to thee. For of theſe, who are called indeed Chriſtians but are Atheiſtical and impious Hereticks, I have ſhewed thee that they teach in all Points Blaſphemous, Atheiſtical, and Abſurd things.* In theſe words he plainly refers to ſome precedent paſſage, which if it can be found will be a certain Key to open to us the ſenſe of this place. I know that Mr. *Mede* * (perhaps not obſerving it) thought that paſſage to have been fraudulently expunged by the Enemies of the *Millenary Opinion:* But it ſeems to me to be ſtill extant. For I find towards the beginning of this *Dialogue,* after that *Juſtin* had endeavoured to prove at large out of Scripture this glorious coming of Chriſt, and to refute thoſe who applied the *Texts* produced by him to that purpoſe to *Hezekiah,* and to *Solomon* whoſe falling off to Idolatry he occaſionally mentions; whereupon *Trypho* objects to him that many who were called *Chriſtians,* did alſo communicate in the Idol-Feaſts. To this, *I ſay,* I find *Juſtin* returning to this anſwer *: *Firſt,* He denies not that there are ſuch as theſe *who own themſelves Chriſtians, and confeſs the Crucified Jeſus to be both Lord and Chriſt, and yet teach not his Doctrines, but the Doctrines of ſeducing ſpirits.* But, ſays he, *We who are the Diſciples of the true and pure Doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt are from this very thing the more Strengthened in our Faith, and become more confirmed in the Hope which by him hath been declared to us. For we now ſee thoſe things viſibly and effectually accompliſh't which he beforehand told us would be done in his Name. For he ſaid, Many ſhall come in*

* Nov. Edit. p. 664.

* P. 31.

* Ibid.

* P. 253.

my Name, &c. By which *Hope* any one that reads the Antecedents and Conſequents will plainly ſee that *Juſtin* means the *Hope* of the *Millennium* (which he had been ſpeaking of before) and conſequently of the *Reſurrection*, which he looked upon as having a ſtrict Connexion with the Doctrine of the *Millennium*, becauſe (as he tells us afterwards) *this Doctrine* was denied by none but ſuch as alſo denied the *Reſurrection*. And of theſe men his deſcription runs on in theſe words, πολλοὶ, &c. *Many* (ſaith he) *both are and have been, that have come in the name of Jeſus, and taught both to ſpeak and do Atheiſtical and Blaſphemous things; and are by us denominated from thoſe men from whom each of their Doctrines and Opinions had its riſe* (namely as it follows *Marcionites, Valentinians*, &c.) *and all theſe in their ſeveral ways teach men to Blaſpheme the Creator of the Univerſe, and the Chriſt whoſe Coming was foretold by him, and the* God *of* Abraham, Iſaac *and* Jacob. *But we have no Communion with them, as knowing them to be Atheiſtical and Impious*, &c. This paſſage in hand, when I compare it with the Text before quoted and conſider the words and characters of them both, I cannot but believe it the very ſame that he refers to in thoſe words, *I have declared to thee, I have intimated to thee, &c.* If ſo, the matter in Controverſie is clear, that the Doctrine of the *Millennium* was univerſal. If it be not the ſame, I could wiſh to be ſhew'd ſome other place in this *Dialogue*, where *Juſtin* makes any ſuch *Declaration* or *Intimation*. In the mean while by compariſon of theſe places, it is evident there are but two ſorts of men that *Juſtin* ſpeaks of. *Firſt*, Who believe the *Millennium*; *We the Diſciples* * *of the true and pure Doctrine*, &c. *viz. My ſelf and many others*; again, *my ſelf and as many Chriſtians as are thoroughly* * *of the right Perſwaſion*. *Secondly*, Who deny the *Millennium*; *Many Chriſtians*, ſaith *Juſtin*; but what Chriſtians? *Of a right perſwaſion? That*, ſaith he, *I have ſignified before*. τοὺς γὰρ, &c. *For I have ſhewed thee of them who are called Chriſtians, but are indeed Atheiſts and Impious Hereticks, that they teach Blaſphemous and Atheiſtical and abſurd things*: And true it is, he did *ſhew* before that thoſe who deny'd the *Millennium* were *many in number, and were called Chriſtians*, &c. *but were Teachers of Blaſphemous and Atheiſtical things*, &c. *and known to be Atheiſts and Impious*, &c. But he *ſhewed* it of none other beſides theſe. So that if this Doctrine were likewiſe denied by *many Chriſtians of the pure and pious perſuaſion*, then *Juſtin Martyr* had foulyforgot himſelf. But if not, then it is plain that the Tranſcribers have wronged *Juſtin* by leaving out a *Negative* which ought to have been inſerted. It is worth obſerving by the way how Mr. *White* pleaſes himſelf with falſe and frivolous Criticiſms upon the words, πολλοὺς & ὀρθογνώμονες. Falſe they are, as Mr. *White* ſhall know if he deſires to hear any more of them; and frivolous they are rendered by my preceding Diſcourſe; for which reaſon I ſay no more of them. But I think he may do well hereafter (as M. *S.* * warily ſuggeſts) not to *engage* himſelf, nor be *hook't* by others, out of his own *infallible way*, but leave it wholly to the * *Bird-witted* Hereticks (as Mr. *S.* calls them) to *perch upon the ſpecifical natures* of Words, as he does *of Things*.

* τῆς ἀληθινῆς ϗ καθαρᾶς διδασκαλίας.

* ὀρθογνώμονες.

* P. 68.

* P. 69.

§. 9. Beſides theſe *Inſtances* I have given of Doctrines and Practices which Mr. *S.* cannot deny to have been innovated, I might inſtance likewiſe in the chief *Points* of Popery, and ſhew that for all their pretence to *Tradition*, they are really *Innovations*. But becauſe this would engage me in tedious Diſputes about particular *Points*' I will only ſingle out one of their moſt fundamental *Doctrines*, viz. that of *Tranſbſtuantiation*; concerning which I ſhall ſhew that, notwithſtanding it is the univerſal perſwaſion of the preſent *Roman* Church, yet they have not, nor can have any aſſurance that it was the Doctrine of Chriſt, and that it is deſcended to them by an uninterrupted Tradition. I ſhall not at all contend againſt the word *Tranſubſtantiation* (which is generally acknowledged to be new) but only the thing ſignified by it, a ſubſtantial change of the Bread and Wine into the Body and Blood of Chriſt. And this I might ſhew at large not to have been the Doctrine of the ancient *Fathers*. But becauſe Mr. *White*, and Dr. *Holden*, and Mr. *Creſſy* do ſo frequently and confidently tells us, that nothing is to be reputed a Traditionary Doctrine the contrary whereof hath been publickly held by any Catholick who continued afterwards uncenſured, and in the Communion of the Church: Therefore I ſhall content my ſelf at preſent with one clear *Teſtimony*, and that of a very eminent *Perſon* in the Church, St. *Theodoret*, concerning whom Pope *Leo* (in an Epiſtle to him, at the end of *Theodoret's* Works) gives this Teſtimony, That *in the judgement of the Apoſtolick See he was free from all ſtain of Hereſie.* The paſſage I intend is in his *Dialogues.* between a *Catholick* under the name of *Orthodoxus*, and *Eraniſtes* who ſuſtained the perſon of an *Heretick*. *Eraniſtes* * maintaining that the Body of Chriſt was changed into the ſubſtance of the Divinity, he illuſtrates it by this ſimilitude. *As* (ſays he) *the Symbols of the Lord's Body and Blood are one thing before the invocation of the Prieſt; but after the invocation are changed and do become another thing: So the Body of our Lord, after his Aſcenſion, is changed into the Divine ſubſtance*, To which *Orthodoxus* returns this anſwer, *Thou art caught in thine own Net. Becauſe the myſtical Symbols after Conſecration do not paſs out of their own Nature; for they remain in their former ſubſtance, figure and appearance, and may be ſeen and handled even as before.* He does not onely in expreſs words deny the ſubſtance of the Symbols to be changed, but the occaſion upon which theſe words are brought in, and the ſcope of them (if they be of any force againſt the *Hereticks* illuſtration) renders them uncapable of any other ſenſe. When Mr. *S.* hath anſwered this *Teſtimony*, I have more for him.

That which I mainly urge againſt this *Doctrine* is, the monſtrous Abſurdities and Contradictions contained in it, together with the neceſſary conſequence of them. Several of the *Abſurdities* of it are well brought together by *Scotus* *, who tells us, That to prove the poſſibility of Chriſts *Body* being contained under the *ſpecies* of *Bread* and *Wine* many things muſt be proved which ſeem to involve a Contradiction; as, 1. *That one quantum* (or extended Body) *may be together in the very ſame place with another.* 2. *That a leſs quantum may be together in the ſame place with a greater*; i. e. a Body of leſs extenſion may occupy not onely the ſame, but as much room as a Body of greater extenſion does; which is to ſay no more but this, that a Body leſs than another may be as great as that other even whil'ſt it is leſs than it. 3. *That a greater quantum may be together with every part of a leſs quantum*, i. e. a Body that is greater than another, may be as little as the leaſt part of that other body which is leſs than it. 4. *That a ſubject may be without quantity*, i. e. there may be a body which hath no kind of Magnitude. 5. That a body may be ſomewhere where it was not before without changing its place, *i. e.* a Body may be removed to another place. 6. *That a quantum may be with-*

out

* Dialog. 2.

* Diſtinct. l. 4. diſt. 10. qu. 1. n. 3.

out any quantitative Mode, i. e. a Body may be extended without any manner of extenſion. *The poſſibility of all which*, he ſaith (and I am very much of his mind) *it would be too tedious a work to prove*; and therefore he only attempts to prove *the two laſt*, which (in all reaſon) is work enough for one man. All theſe *ſeeming* Contradictions (as he modeſtly calls them) are by his own acknowledgment involved in this Doctrine. To theſe I might add many more; as, How a thing can be ſaid to be changed into another thing which did exiſt before? How a Body can be preſent in a place after the manner of a ſpirit? and yet this they affirm concerning the preſence of Chriſt's Body in the Sacrament; one might as well ſay that Snow is black, but not after the manner of blackneſs, but in the way of whiteneſs, which is to talk non-ſenſe after the manner of ſenſe: How the whole Body of Chriſt can be contained under the leaſt ſenſible part of the ſpecies of Bread, as is generally affirmed: nay, and *Scotus* * adds, that the whole Body is under every little part in its full proportion; for he ſays expreſly, That *the Head and the Foot of the Body of Chriſt are as far diſtant from one another in the ſacrament, as they are in Heaven*: as if one ſhould ſay that a Body, all whoſe parts lye within the compaſs of a ſmall pins-head, may yet within that little compaſs have parts two yards diſtant from one another: And laſtly, how the ſenſible *ſpecies* of Bread, *e. g. quantity, whiteneſs, ſoftneſs*, &c. can exiſt without any *ſubject*? to affirm the poſſibility of which (as generally they do) is to ſay that there may be quanties *of white and ſoft nothings*; For this is the plain Engliſh of that aſſertion, *that ſenſible ſpecies may exiſt without a ſubject*; which being ſtrip'd of thoſe terms of Art (*ſpecies* and *ſubject*) that do a little diſguiſe it, it appears to be plain *Non-ſenſe*.

* Ibid. qu. 1. n. 12.

Now the proper and neceſſary *conſequence* of this Doctrine is to take away all certainty, and eſpecially the certainty of ſenſe. For if that which my ſight and taſte and touch do all aſſure me to be a little piece of Wafer, may notwithſtanding this be Fleſh and Bloud, even the whole Body of a man; then notwithſtanding the greateſt aſſurance that Senſe can give me, that any thing is this or that, it may be quite another thing from what Senſe reported it to be. If ſo, then farwell the *Infallibility* of Tradition, which depends upon the certainty of Senſe: And which is a worſe conſequence, if this Doctrine be admitted we can have no ſufficient aſſurance that the Chriſtian Doctrine is a Divine Revelation. For the aſſurance of that depending upon the aſſurance we have of the Miracles ſaid to be wrought for the confirmation of it, and all the aſſurance we can have of a Miracle depending upon the certainty of our ſenſes, it is very plain that *that* Doctrine which takes away the certainty of Senſe, does in ſo doing overthrow the certainty of Chriſtian Religion. And what can be more vain than to pretend, that a man may be aſſured that ſuch a Doctrine is revealed by God, and conſequently true, which if it be true, a man can have no aſſurance at all of any Divine Revelation? Surely nothing is to be admitted by us as certain, which being admitted we can be certain of nothing. It is a wonder that any man who conſiders the natural conſequences of this *Doctrine* can be a Papiſt; unleſs he have attained to Mr. *Creſſy's* pitch of *Learning*, who ſpeaking of the difficult Arguments wherewith this Doctrine was preſſed, ſays * plainly, *I muſt anſwer freely and ingenuouſly, that I have not learned to anſwer ſuch Arguments, but to deſpiſe them*. And if this be a good way, when ever we have a mind to believe any thing to ſcorn thoſe Objections againſt it which we cannot ſolve

* Exomol. c. 73. Sect. 7.

ſolve; then Chriſtian Religion hath no advantage above the vileſt Enthuſiaſms; and a *Turk* may maintain *Mahomet* and his *Alcoran* (in oppoſition to *Chriſt* and his *Doctrine)* againſt all that *Grotius*, or any other hath ſaid, if he can but keep his countenance, and gravely ſay, *I have not learned to anſwer ſuch Arguments but to deſpiſe them.*

§. 10. I will add one *Inſtance* more in another kind, to ſhew the uncertainty of *Oral* and *Practical* Traditions, and that ſhall be the Tradition concerning *Pope Jone*; than which ſcarce any was ever more generally received in the *Hiſtorical* kind. Many and great *Authours* affirm it, as *Teſtifiers* of the general Fame. None ever denied it till the *Reformers* had made uſe of it to the diſadvantage of Popery. Since that time not onely Papiſts deny it, but ſeveral of our own Writers ceaſe to believe it. *Phil. Bergomenſis* tells the ſtory thus: *Anno* 858. *John the 27th. Pope*, &c. *The Tradition is that this perſon was a Woman*, &c. Here's an *Oral Tradition.* He concludes thus; *In deteſtation of whoſe filthineſs, and to perpetuate the memory of her Name, the Popes even to this day going on Proceſſion with the People and the Clergy, when they come to the place of her Travel*, &c. *in token of abomination they turn from it, and go a by-way; and being paſt that deteſtable place, they return into the way, and finiſh their Proceſſion.* Here is one *Practical Tradition. And for avoiding of the like miſcarriages, it was decreed that no one ſhould thereafter be admitted into St.* Peter's *Chair* priuſquam per foratam ſedem futuri Pontificis genitalia ab ultimo Diacone Cardinale attractarentur: Here is another with a Witneſs * *Sabellicus* relates the * Ennead. 9. L. 1. ſame; and moreover ſays that this *Porphyry Chair was* in his time *to be ſeen in the Popes Palace.* He adds indeed that *Platina thinks that this Tradition of Pope* Jone *was not faithfully delivered to Poſterity. But however* (ſays he) *ſuch a Tradition there is* Concerning the *firſt Practical Tradition*, *Platina* ſays that *he may not deny it.* For the *ſecond*, he thinks *the Chair rather deſign'd for a Stool* for another uſe, *&c.* He concludes, *Theſe things which I have related are commonly reported, yet from uncertain and obſcure Authours: Therefore I reſolved* (ſays he) *briefly and nakedly to ſet them down, leſt I ſhould ſeem too obſtinately and pertinaciouſly to have omitted that which almoſt all affirm.* It is no wonder that he ſays the *Authours* of this Report were *uncertain and obſcure*, ſince ſo very few writ any thing in that Age. But ſuppoſe none had writ of it, ſo long as he acknowledges it to have been a *general Oral Tradition* atteſted by a ſolemn and conſtant *Practice*, it has (according to Mr. *S*'s Principles) greater certainty than if it had been brought down to us by a hundred Books written in that very Age. So that here's an *Oral* and *Practical Tradition*, continued we are ſure for ſome hundreds of years, preſerved and propagated by a ſolemn *Practice* of the *Popes*, *Clergy* and *People* of *Rome* in their *Proceſſions*, and by a *notorious Cuſtome* at the *Election* of every *Pope*; and in a matter of ſo great importance to their Religion (the honour of the See of *Rome*, and the uninterrupted Succeſſion from St. *Peter* being ſo nearly concerned in it) that, had it been falſe, they had been obliged under pain of Damnation, not only not to have promoted it, but to have uſed all means to have diſcovered the falſity of it. Therefore Mr. *S.* is bound by his own Principles either to allow it for a Truth, or elſe to give an account when and how it began; * P. 340. which may poſſible be made out by *We Metaphyſicians* (as he * ſtyles himſelf, and his *Scientifical Brethren)* but I aſſure him it is paſt the skill of * *Note-Book Learning.* * P. 337.

SECT. X.

The fourth Anſwer to to his ſecond Demonſtration.

§. 1. IT is not the preſent perſwaſion of the *Church of Rome*, nor ever was, that their Faith hath deſcended to them by *Oral Tradition* as the ſole *Rule* of it. And this being proved, the *Suppoſition* upon which his *Demonſtration* is built falls to the ground.

And for the proof of this, I appeal to that * *Decree* of the *Council* of *Trent*, in which they declare, That becauſe the *Chriſtian Faith and Diſcipline are contained in written Books and unwritten Traditions*, &c. *therefore they do receive and honour the Books of Scripture and alſo Tradition* [pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia] *with equal pious affection and reverence*; which I underſtand not how thoſe do, who ſet aſide the Scripture, and make Tradition the ſole Rule of their Faith. And conſonantly to this *Decree*, the general Doctrine of the *Romiſh* Church is, that *Scripture and Tradition* make up the *Rule of Faith*. So the *Roman Catechiſm* (ſet forth by order of the Council of *Trent*) ſays, * that *the ſum of the Doctrine delivered to the Faithful is contained in the Word of God, which is diſtributed into Scripture and Tradition*. *Bellarmine* * ſpeaks to the ſame purpoſe, *That the Scripture is a Rule of Faith, not an entire but partial one. The entire Rule is the Word of God, which is divided into two partial Rules, Scripture, and Tradition.* According to this, the adequate Rule of Faith is the *Word* of *God*; which is contained partly in *Scripture*, and partly in the *Tradition* of the Church. And that *Scripture* is look'd upon by them as the *principal* Rule and *primary* foundation of their Faith, and *Tradition* as onely ſupplying the defects of Scripture, as to ſome *Doctrines* and *Rites* not contained in Scripture, muſt be evident to any one that has been converſant in the chief of their controverſial Divines. *Bellarmine* * where he gives the *marks* of a *Divine Tradition* ſpeaks to this purpoſe, That that which they call a *Divine Tradition* is ſuch a *Doctrine* or *Rite* as is not found in *Scripture*, but embraced by the whole Church; and for that reaſon believed to have deſcended from the Apoſtles. And he tells us farther *, That the Apoſtles committed all to writing which was commonly and publickly Preached; and that all things are in Scripture, which men are bound to know and believe explicitely: But then he ſays, that there were other things which the Apoſtles did not commonly and publickly teach; and theſe they did not commit to *Writing*, but delivered them onely by *word of mouth to the Prelates and Prieſts and perfect men of the Church*. And theſe are the Apoſtolical Traditions he ſpeaks of. Cardinal *Perron* * ſays, *That the Scripture is the foundation of the Chriſtian Doctrine, either mediately or immediately.* And *that the Authority of unwritten Tradition is founded in general on theſe ſentences of the Apoſtle*, * *Hold the Traditions*, &c. Again, * *The things which thou haſt heard of me among many Witneſſes commit to faithful men*, &c. And that *the Authority of the Church to preſerve, and eſpecially to declare theſe, is founded in this Propoſition*, viz, * *That the Church is the pillar and ground of Truth*. So that according to him, the *primary Rule of Faith* is *the Scripture*, in which the Authority of Tradition is founded. Mr. *Knott* * ſays expreſly, *We acknowledge the H. Scripture to be a moſt perfect Rule, for as much as a Writing can be a Rule; we onely deny that it excludes, either Divine Tradition, though it be unwritten, or an external Judge to keep, to propoſe, to interpret it*, &c. So that (according to him) *Scripture* is a perfect Rule, onely it does not exclude *unwritten Tradition*, &c. By which that he does not underſtand (as Mr. *S.* does) a con-

* Decret. primum quartæ Seſſ.

* In præfat.

* De Verbo Dei, &c. l. 4. 12.

* De Verbo Dei non ſcripto. L. 4. c. 9.

* Ibid c. 11.

* Reply. Obſervat. 3. c. 4.

* 2 Theſſ. 2. 15.

* 2 Tim. 2. 2.

* 1 Tim. 3 15.

* Charity maintained. c. 2. Sect. 1.

a concurrent *Oral Tradition* of all the ſame Doctrines which are contained in *Scripture*, but other Doctrines not therein contained, is plain from what he ſays elſewhere *, *We do not diſtinguiſh Tradition from the written Word, becauſe Tradition is not written by any, or in any Book or Writing; but becauſe it is not written in the Scripture or Bible*; *Bellarmine* * alſo ſays the ſame. And as for the *interpreting of Scripture*, he tells us that this is not the office of a *Rule*, but of a *Judge*. * *There is* (ſays he) *a great and plain diſtinction between a Judge and a Rule. For as in a Kingdom the Judge hath his Rule to follow, which are the received Laws and Cuſtoms; which are not fit or able to declare, and be Judges to themſelves, but that Office muſt belong to a living Judge: So the Holy Scripture is and may be a Rule but cannot be a Judge.* Here he makes the *Scripture* as much a Rule for *matters of Faith*, as the *Laws* of the Land are for *Civil matters*. And in his *Reply* to Mr. *Chillingworth*, he hath a *Chapter* of above 150 Pages, the *Title* whereof is, *Scripture is not the only Rule of Faith*; which (had he with Mr. *S.* believed *Oral Tradition* to be the ſole Rule of Faith) had been as abſurd as it would be to write a *Book* to prove that *Turks* are not the *onely Chriſtians* in the World. Mr. *Creſſy* likewiſe (not very conſiſtently to himſelf) lays down this *Concluſion*; * *The entire Rule of Faith is contained not onely in Scripture, but likewiſe in unwritten Tradition.*

* Reply to Mr. *Chill.* c. 2. Sect. 179.
* De Verbo Dei, &c. L. 4. c. 2.
* Charity maintained. c. 2. Sect. 3.
* Exomol. c. 20.

§. 2. Now all this is as contrary as can be to Mr. *Ruſhworth*'s new Rule of Faith. Therefore Mr. *White* ſays *, *They ſpeak ill who teach that ſome things are known in the Church from Scripture, ſome by Tradition.* And Mr. *Holden* (in oppoſition to thoſe who make Scripture any part of the Rule of Faith) advances one of the moſt wild and uncharitable Poſitions that ever I yet met withal, *viz.* * *That if one ſhould believe all the Articles of the Catholick Faith,* &c. *for this reaſon becauſe he thought they were all expreſly revealed in Scripture, or implicitely contained ſo as they might be deduced from thence, and would not have believed them had he not judged that they might be evinced from Scripture; yet this man could be no true Catholick: Becauſe* (as he tells us afterwards *) *we muſt receive* the Chriſtian Doctrine *as coming to us by Tradition; for onely by this means (excluding the Scriptures) Chriſt hath appointed revealed Truths to be received and communicated.* In the mean time Cardinal *Perron* (unleſs he altered his mind) is in a ſad caſe, who believed the *Authority of Tradition* it ſelf for this reaſon, becauſe *it was founded in Scripture.*

* Tabul. Suffrag. p. 96.
* Analyſ. Fid. L. 1. c. 6.
* C. 8.

§. 3. And this *fundamental* difference about the *Rule of Faith*, between the *generality* of their *Divines* and Mr. *S*'s *ſmall party*, is fully acknowledged by the Traditioniſts themſelves. Dr. *Holden* ſays *, That *their Divines who reſolve Faith according to the common Opinion do inevitable fall into that ſhameful Circle* (of proving the Divine Authority of the Scripture by the Church, and the Infallibility of the Church back again by the Scripture) *becauſe they dare not build their Faith upon the natural evidence and certainty of Tradition.* So that Dr. *Holden*'s way of reſolving Faith, is different from the *common Opinion* of their *Divines*, which he ſays * *does not differ from the Opinion of thoſe who reſolve their Faith into the private Spirits*; and this (according to Mr. *White* *) is the very way of the *Calviniſts*, and *of the abſurdeſt Sects*. Nay, Mr. *White* ſays farther *, That he will be content *to ſuffer all the puniſhment that is due to*

* L. 1. c. 9.
* L. 1. c. 3.
* Exetaſ. P. 70.
* Ibid.

Calumniators, if the Roman Divines (he there ſpeaks of) *do not hold the ſame Rule of Faith with the Calviniſts, and all the abſurdeſt Sects.* So that it ſeems that the *Calviniſts*, &c. do not in their *Rule of Faith* differ from the *Papiſt*, but onely from Mr. *White*, Mr. *S.* &c. Now the *Divines* he there ſpeaks of, are the *Cenſors* of Doctrines at *Rome*, according to whoſe advice his *infallible Holineſs* and the *Cardinals* of the *Inquiſition* do uſually proceed in cenſuring of Doctrines. Concerning theſe *Divines* he goes on to expoſtulate in this manner; * *Shall we endure theſe men to ſit as Cenſors and Judges of Faith, who agree with Hereticks in the very firſt Principle which diſtinguiſhes Catholicks from Hereticks?* Again *, *Theſe are thy gods* O Rome! *upon theſe thou dependeſt, whilſt prating Ignorance triumphs in the Roman College.* And he ſays the ſame likewiſe of the generality of their *Schoole-Divines*, whom he calls *Scepticks*, becauſe they do not own his *Demonſtrative* way. Inſomuch that he tells us *, *That few ſound parts are left uninfected with this Plague of Scepticiſm* *; *that this is an univerſal Gangrene* *; *that there are but few that go the way of Demonſtration, and theſe are either wearied out, or elſe live retiredly, or deſpair of any remedy of theſe things.* And indeed all along that *Book* he bemoans *himſelf* and *his Traditionary Brethren* as a deſolate and forlorn Party, who have *Truth* on their ſide, but want *company* and encouragement. So he tells us *, *That the true* ſcientifical *Divines dare not profeſs their knowledge, leſt they ſhould be expoſed by the Sophiſters* of their Church *to the deriſion and ſcorn either of their Judges or of the People.*

* Ib. p. 73.
* P. 144.
* P. 64.
* P. 149.
* P. 67, 68.
* P. 101.

§. 4. So that upon examination of the whole matter, it appears that Mr. *S*'s *Demonſtration* proceeds upon a falſe *Suppoſition*. That it is the *perſwaſion* of their *preſent Church*, that *Tradition* is the *ſole Rule of Faith*. For there is no ſuch matter ; unleſs Mr. *S.* mean by *their Church* a few private perſons, who are look'd upon by thoſe who have the chief power in their Church as *Heretical*: as we may reaſonably conjecture by the proceedings at *Rome* againſt Mr. *White*; many of whoſe Books are there condemned *, as *containing things manifeſtly Heretical, erroneous in the Faith, raſh, ſcandalous, ſeditious, and falſe reſpectively*, &c. And all this done, notwithſtanding that the chief ſubject of thoſe Books is the explication and defence of this moſt *Catholick* Principle, *That Oral Tradition is the only Rule of Faith.* To ſum up then the whole buſineſs: If nothing be to be owned for Chriſtian Doctrine (as the *Traditioniſts* ſay) but what is the general perſwaſion of thoſe who are acknowledged to be in the communion of the *Roman Catholick* Church ; then much leſs can this *Principle* (*That Oral Tradition is the ſole Rule of Faith*) which is pretended to be the foundation of the whole Chriſtian Doctrine, be received as deſcended from *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles* ; ſince it is ſo far from being the general perſwaſion of *that Church at the preſent*, that it has been, and ſtill is generally diſowned. But Mr: *White* has a *ſalvo* for this. For although he grant *, That *very many of their School-men maintain that Tradition is neceſſary only for ſome Points, not clearly expreſſed in Scripture, whence* (he ſays) *it ſeems to follow that they build not the whole Body of their Faith upon Tradition*: yet he tells us *there is a vaſt difference betwixt relying on Tradition, and ſaying or thinking we do ſo.* Suppoſe there be ; yet I hope that mens ſaying that they do not relie on *Tradition* as their only Rule, is a better evidence that they do not, than any mans ſurmiſe to the contrary

* Exetaſ.p.9.
* Apol.p.38.

trary is that they do, though they think and ſay they do not; which is in effect to ſay that they do, though we have as much aſſurance as we can have that they do not. Beſides, how is this Rule *ſelf evident to all, even to the Rude Vulgar as to its ruling power* (as Mr. *S.* affirms it is) when the greateſt part even of the *Learned* among them *think* and *ſay* that it is not the *onely Rule*? But Mr. *White* endeavours to illuſtrate this dark point by a * *ſimilitude*, which is to this ſenſe; As the *Scepticks* who deny *this Principle, That Contradictions cannot be true at once*, yet in their lives *and civil actions proceed as if they owned it*: So the *Schoolmen*, though they deny Tradition to be the onely Rule of Faith, yet by reſolving their Faith into the Church which owns this *Principle*, they do alſo in practiſe own it though they ſay they do not. So that the generality of learned *Papiſts* are juſt ſuch *Catholicks* as the *Scepticks* are *Dogmatiſts*, that is a company of abſurd people that confute their *Principles* by their *practice*. According to this reaſoning, I perceive the *Proteſtants* will prove as good *Catholicks* as any, for they do only *think* and *ſay* that *Tradition* is not the *Rule* of Faith; but that they practically relie upon it, Mr. *S.* hath paſt his word for them: For he aſſures us * (and we may relie upon a man that writes nothing but Demonſtration) that *if we look narrowly into the bottom of our hearts, we ſhall diſcover the natural method of Tradition to have unawares ſettled our Judgements concerning Faith; however when our other Concerns awake deſign in us, we proteſt againſt it, and ſeem perhaps to our unreflecting ſelves to embrace and hold to the mere guidance of the Letter of Scripture.* So that in reality we are as good *Catholicks*, and as true *holders to Tradition* as any *Papiſt* of them all, at the bottom of our thoughts and in our ſettled judgement; however we have taken up an humour to *proteſt* againſt it, and *may ſeem perhaps to our unreflecting ſelves* to be Proteſtants.

* Ib. p. 39.

* P. 30. & 31.

§. 5. Thus much may ſuffice to have ſpoken to his *two* great *Arguments*; *or * as he (good man) unfortunately calls them Demonſtrations*; which yet to ſay truth are not properly *his*, but the *Authors* of *Ruſhworth*'s Dialogues, the main foundation of which *Book* is the ſubſtance of theſe Demonſtrations. Only before I take leave of them, I cannot but reflect upon a paſſage of Mr. *S*'s * wherein he tells his Readers that they are not *obliged to bend their brains to ſtudy his Book with that ſeverity as they would do an Euclid*; meaning perhaps one of Mr. *White*'s *Euclids*; for it does not appear by his way of Demonſtration that ever he dealt with any other. As for the true *Euclid*, I ſuppoſe any one that hath taſted his Writings, will at the reading of Mr. *S*'s unbend his *brains* without bidding, and ſmile to ſee himſelf ſo demurely diſcharged from a *Study* ſo abſurd and ridiculous.

* P. 173.

* P. 163.

SECT. XI.

Concerning ſome other advantages of Tradition, &c.

§. 1. I Should now take into conſideration his Ninth *Diſcourſe*, in which he pretends to *open the incomparable ſtrength of the Churches humane Authority, and the Advantages which accrue to it by the ſupernatural aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt*: But that there is nothing material in it, which hath not been anſwered already. Only I deſire him to explain, how the ſupernatural Aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt can (according to his Principles)

ples) add to our aſſurance of the certainty of Tradition. Becauſe we can have no greater certainty of the ſupernatural Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, than we have that there is an Holy Ghoſt, and of this we can have no certainty (according to Mr. *S.*) but by Tradition, which conveys this Doctrine to us. And if Tradition of it ſelf can infallibly aſſure us that there are ſupernatural Aſſiſtances of the Holy Ghoſt, then a man muſt know that Tradition is infallible antecedently to his knowledge of any ſupernatural Aſſiſtance. And if ſo, what can any ſupernatural Aſſiſtance add to my aſſurance of the certainty of Tradition, which I do ſuppoſe to be infallible before I can know of any ſupernatural Aſſiſtance? Can any thing be more ludicrous, than to build firſt all our certainty of the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt upon the certainty of Tradition, and then afterwards to make the certainty of Tradition to relie upon the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt? As if that could contribute to our aſſurance of the certainty of Tradition, which unleſs Tradition be firſt ſuppoſed certain, is it ſelf wholy uncertain.

§. 2. The Concluſion of this Ninth *Diſcourſe* is ſomewhat Ecſtatical; poſſibly from a ſudden diſorder of his fancy upon the contemplation of his own performances, to ſee what a *Man* he has made himſelf (with the help of *Ruſhworth*'s *Dialogues*) or rather what his *Party* has made him by
* P. 165. & the *Office* they put upon him: For it ſeems (by his telling) * Mr. *Creſſy* and the reſt are ordained to cajole the *Fools, leaving him the way of Reaſon and Principles*; and that himſelf is choſen out to Demonſtrate to the *Wiſe*, or *thoſe who judge of* things *per altiſſimas cauſas.* In the diſcharge of which glorious Office he declares that he *intends no Confutation of thoſe Authors* which Mr. *Creſſy* and others have medled with: *Yet if any will be ſo charitable as to judge he hath ſolidly confuted* them, *becauſe he hath radically and fundamentally overthrown all their Arguments,* &c. he ſhall rejoyce and
* P. 159. be thankful. That the * *intelligent Reader (for he writes to none but ſuch)* may alſo rejoice with him, I ſhall recite the whole paſſage, for it is thick of Demonſtration, and as likely as any in his Book to have the *altiſſimas cauſas* contained in it.

* P. 93. §. 3. * *It would require a large Volume to unfold particularly how each virtue contributes to ſhew the inerrable indefidiency of Tradition, and how the Principles of almoſt each Science are concerned in demonſtrating its Certainty*: Arithmetick *lends her Numbring and Multiplying Faculty, to ſcan the vaſt Number of Teſtifiers*; Geometry *her Proportions to ſhew a kind of infinite ſtrength of Certitude in Chriſtian Tradition, above theſe Atteſtations which breed Certainty in humane Affairs*; Logick *her skill to frame and make us ſee the connexions it has with the Principles of our Underſtanding*; Nature *her Laws of Motion and action*; Morality *her firſt Principle that nothing is done* gratis *by a Cognoſcitive Nature, and that the Body of Traditionary Doctrine is moſt conformable to Practical Reaſon*: Hiſtorical Prudence *clears the Impoſſibility of an* undiſcernable *revolt from Points ſo deſcended and held ſo Sacred*; Politicks *ſhew this to be the beſt way imaginable to convey down ſuch a Law as it concerns every man to be skilful in*; Metaphyſicks *engages the Eſſences of Things, and the very notion of* Being *which fixes every Truth, ſo eſtabliſhing the ſcientifical Knowledge which ſpring from each particular Nature by their firſt Cauſes or Reaſons exempt from changes or motion.* Divinity *demonſtrateth it moſt worthy* God *and moſt conducive to bring Mankind to Bliſs.*

Laſtly Controverſie *evidences the total uncertainty of any thing concerning Faith if this can be uncertain, and makes uſe of all the reſt to eſtabliſh the certainty of this* Firſt Principle. A very fit concluſion for ſuch *Demonſtrations* as went before. It is well Mr. *S. writes to none but intelligent Readers*; for were it not a thouſand pities, that ſo manly, and ſolid, and convincing a diſcourſe as this ſhould be caſt away upon fools?

SECT. XII.

M. S's Corollaries conſidered.

§. 1. AS for his *Corollaries*, ſuppoſing them to be rightly deduced from his former Diſcourſes, they muſt of neceſſity fall with them. For they ſignifie nothing but upon this ſuppoſition that his foregoing Diſcourſes are true. And yet this being granted, it were eaſie to ſhew that moſt of them are groſly faulty. For *Firſt*, Several of them are plainly coincident. The *ſecond*, *viz. None can with right pretend to be a Church but the followers of Tradition*, is the very ſame in ſenſe with the 11*th*, viz. *No company of men hang together like a Body of a Chriſtian Commonwealth or Church, but that which adheres to Tradition.* So likewiſe the 12*th* and 14*th* are contained in the 15*th*: The 16*th*, and 17*th*, in the 19*th*: The 16*th*, 17*th*, 18*th*. and 19*th* in the 21*ſt*. And the 32*d* and 34*th* in the 31*ſt*. *Secondly*, Divers of them are manifeſtly abſurd, as the 12*th*, 13*th*, 14*th*, 16*th*, 17*th*, 18*th*, 19*th*, the ſum of which is, That there is *no arguing againſt Tradition from Scripture, or the Authority of the Church, or Fathers and Councils, or from Hiſtory and Teſtimonial Writings, or from contrary Tradition, or Reaſon, or any Inſtances whatſoever*: which is as much as to ſay, If this *Propoſition* be true, *That Tradition is certain*, then it cannot by any kind of Argument be proved to be falſe. But is this any peculiar Conſectary from the truth of this *Propoſition*? Doth not the ſame follow from every Propoſition? That if it be true, it cannot be proved to be falſe; yet no man was ever yet ſo frivolous, as to draw ſuch a conſequence from the ſuppoſed truth of any Propoſition. His 23*d* alſo is ſingularly abſurd, That *There is no poſſibility of arguing at all againſt Tradition rightly underſtood, or the living voice of the Catholick Church, with any ſhew of Reaſon.* Theſe are large words. It might have contented a reaſonable man to have ſaid, that no good Argument could be brought againſt it: But he is jealous of his *Hypotheſis*, and can never think it ſafe till it be ſhot-free; nor will that content him, but it muſt be alſo impoſſible for any one to make a *ſhew* of ſhooting at it. This were, I confeſs, a peculiar priviledge of Mr. *S*'s *Diſcourſes* above other mens, if they were (as he ſays) by evidence of Demonſtration ſo ſecured, that not only no ſubſtantial Argument could be brought againſt them, but that even the moſt ſubtil *Schoolman* of them all ſhould not be able to come near them with ſo much as a *videtur quod non.* But it may be he means no more by this *Corollary*, then what he ſaid in the 18*th*, viz. *That no ſolid Argument from Reaſon can be brought againſt Tradition*: If ſo, then the ſenſe of his 23*d Corollary* muſt be this, That there is no poſſibility of arguing at all againſt Tradition with any *ſolid ſhew*, or *ſubſtantial ſhadow* of Reaſon; which would be a little inconvenient. I will inſtance but in one more, his 40*th*, which is this, *The knowledge of Traditions Certainty is the firſt knowledge or Principle in Controverſial Divinity*; i. e. *without which nothing is known or knowable in that Science.* Which is to infer, that becauſe he hath with much pains proved the certainty of Tradition, therefore it is *ſelf-evident*, i. e. needed no proof. Nay, it is to conclude the preſent matter in Controverſie and that which is the main debate of his *Book* to be the *firſt Principle* in Controverſial Divinity, *i. e.* ſuch a Propoſition as every one ought to grant before he can have any right to diſpute about it. This is a very prudent courſe, to make *begging the queſtion* the *firſt Principle in Controverſie*; which would it but be granted, I am very much of his mind that the *method* he takes would be the beſt way to make *Controverſie* a *Science*; becauſe he that ſhould have the luck or boldneſs to beg firſt, would have it in his power to make what he pleaſed certain.

§. 2. Were it worth while, I might farther purſue the Abſurdities of his *Corollaries.* For they are not ſo terrible as he makes ſhew of, by his telling Dr. *Caſaubon* * That *Sure-footing and its Corollaries may put him out of his Wits*: Which though intended for an Affront to the Doctor, yet it may be mollified with a good interpretation; for if the reading of wild and phantaſtical ſtuff be apt to diſorder a very learned head, then ſo far *Mr. S*'s ſaying may have truth in it.

* P. 330.

It remains only that I requite his 41 *Corol.* not with an equal number, but with two or three natural *Conſectaries* from the Doctrine of his Book.

Firſt, No man can certainly underſtand the meaning of any Book whatſoever, any farther than the Contents of it are made known to us by a concurrent *Oral Tradition.* For the Arguments whereby *he* and Mr. *Ruſhworth* endeavour to prove it impoſſible without *Tradition* to attain to the certain ſenſe of Scripture, do equally extend to all other Books.

Secondly, The memory of matters of Fact done long ago may be better preſerved by *general Rumor* than by publick *Records.* For this is the plain Engliſh of that Aſſertion, That Oral Tradition is a better and more ſecure way of Conveyance than Writing.

Thirdly, That the Generality of Papiſts are no Chriſtians, For if (as he affirms) Tradition be the ſole Rule of Faith, and thoſe who diſown this Rule be *ipſo facto cut off from the Root of Faith*, i. e. unchriſtian'd; And if (as I have ſhewn) the Generality of Papiſts do diſown this Rule: Then it is plain that they are no Chriſtians.

THE RULE OF FAITH.

PART IV.

Teſtimonies concerning the Rule of Faith.

SECT. I.

§. 1. THus far *in the way of Reaſon and Principles.* The reſt is *Note-book Learning,* which he tells us * he is *not much a Friend to*; and there is no kindneſs loſt, for it is as little a Friend to him and his Cauſe as he can be to it. I ſhall firſt examine the *Authorities* he brings for *Tradition*; and then produce expreſs *Teſtimonies* in behalf of *Scripture.* In both which I ſhall be very brief; in the one, becauſe his Teſtimonies require no long Anſwer; in the other, becauſe it would be to little purpoſe to trouble Mr. *S.* with many *Fathers,* who for ought appears by his *Book* is acquainted with none but *Father White,* as I ſhall ſhew hereafter. By the way, I cannot much blame him for the courſe he uſes to take with other mens Teſtimonies, becauſe it is the onely way that a man in his circumſtances can take; otherwiſe, nothing can be in it ſelf more unreaſonable, than to pretend to anſwer Teſtimonies by ranking them under ſo many *faulty Heads*; and having ſo done, magiſterially to require his *Adverſary* to vindicate them, by ſhewing that they do not fall under ſome of thoſe Heads, though he have not ſaid one word againſt any of them particularly; nay, though he have not ſo much as recited any one of them; for then the Trick would be ſpoiled, and his Catholick Reader who perhaps may believe him in the *general,* might ſee Reaſon not to do ſo if he ſhould deſcend to *particulars,* which (as he well obſerves) would make his * *Diſcourſe to look with a contingent Face.*

Mr. S's Teſti-monies exa-mined.

* P. 337.

* P. 161.

§. 2. I begin with his three *Authorities* from Scripture; which when I conſider, I ſee no reaſon why he (of all men) ſhould find fault with my Lord Biſhop of *Down*'s *Diſſuaſive* for being ſo * *thin and ſleight in Scripture-Citations.* Nor do I ſee how he will anſwer it to Mr. *Ruſhworth*, for tranſgreſſing that prudent *Rule* of his, *viz.* * *That the Catholick ſhould never undertake to convince his Adverſary out of Scripture,* &c. For which he gives this ſubſtantial Reaſon, * *becauſe this were to ſtrengthen his Opponent in his own Ground and Principle*, viz. *That all is to be proved out of Scripture*; which he tells us preſently after is no more fit to convince, than *a Beetle is to cut withal*; meaning it perhaps of *Texts* ſo applied as theſe which follow. * *This ſhall be to you a direct way, ſo that Fools cannot err in it.* * *This is my Covenant with them, ſaith the Lord; my Spirit which is in thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth ſhall not depart from thy mouth, and from the mouth of thy Seed, and from the mouth of thy Seeds ſeed from henceforth for ever.* * *I will give my Law in their bowels, and in their hearts will I write it*: From which *Texts* if Mr. *S.* can prove *Tradition to be the onely Rule of Faith*, any better than the *Philoſophers Stone* or the *Longitude* may be proved from the 1. *Chap.* of *Geneſis*, I am content they ſhould paſs for valid Teſtimonies: Though I might require of him (by his own Law) before theſe *Texts* can ſignifie any thing to his purpoſe, to demonſtrate that this is the Traditionary ſenſe of theſe Texts, and that it hath been univerſally in all Ages received by the Church under that Notion; and then to ſhew how it comes to paſs that ſo many of the *Fathers*, and of their own *Commentators* have interpreted them to another ſenſe: And *laſtly*, to ſhew how Scripture which has no certain ſenſe but from Tradition, and of the ſenſe whereof Tradition cannot aſſure us unleſs it be the *Rule of Faith*; I ſay, how *Scripture* can prove Tradition to be the *Rule of Faith*, which can prove nothing at all unleſs Tradition be firſt proved to be the *Rule of Faith*, This I take to be as *ſhameful a Circle* as that wherewith Dr. *Holden* upbraids the generality of his *Brethren*.

* P. 320.
* Dial. 2. Sect. 14.
* Ibid.
* Iſa. 35. 8.
* Iſa. 59. 21.
* Jer. 31.

§. 3. I proceed to his *Authorities* from *Fathers* and *Councils*; all which (not one of them excepted) he hath taken out of Mr. *White's Tabulæ Suffragiales*, without the leaſt acknowledgement from whom he had them. And that it might be evident that he had not conſulted the Books themſelves for them, he hath taken them with all their faults, and with the very ſame errours of Citation which Mr. *White* had been guilty of before him. So that though he is pleas'd to ſay of himſelf that * *he is a bad Tranſcriber*, yet I muſt do him that right, to aſſure the Reader that he does it very punctually and exactly.

* P 239.

§. 4. He begins with *Councils*, of which he tells us *he will onely mention three in ſeveral Ages.*

The firſt is the *Firſt Synod of Lateran.* One might have expected, after he had told us he would mention three in ſeveral Ages, he ſhould have produced them according to the order of Time, and have begun with the Council of *Sardica*, which was near 300 years before the *Lateran*. But there was a good reaſon why the *Lateran* ſhould be firſt produced, *viz.* becauſe it is mentioned before the other in Mr. *White*'s Book. Well, but what ſays this *Synod*? *We all confeſs unanimouſly and conſequently, with one heart and mouth, the Tenets and Sayings of the Holy Fathers; adding nothing, ſubſtracting nothing of thoſe things which are delivered us by them; and we believe as the Fathers have believed, we preach ſo as they have taught.* The force of which *Teſtimony*

Mr. *S.* lays upon the Word *delivered*, as if that Word where ever it is met with in *Councils* or *Fathers*, muſt needs be underſtood of *oral delivery*; whereas it is a general Word indifferently uſed for conveyance either by *writing*, or *word of mouth*. In this place it plainly refers to the *writings* of particular *Fathers*, out of whom a long catalogue of Teſtimonies againſt the Hereſie of the *Monothelites* had been read juſt before this Declaration of the Synod. Now what ſignifies this to *oral Tradition*'s being the *Rule of Faith*, that this Synod declares her Faith, in oppoſition to the hereſie of the *Monothelites*, to be conſonant in all things to thoſe Teſtimonies which had been produced out of the Fathers?

The next is the *Council of Sardica*; out of an *Epiſtle* of which *Council* he cites theſe words, *We have received this Doctrine, we have been taught ſo, we hold this Catholick Tradition, Faith and Confeſſion.* Which are general words, and differently applicable to *Oral Tradition*, or Writing, or both. But be they what they will, Mr. *S.* ought not to have been ignorant, that this Council was rejected by *St. Auſtin* and other Orthodox Fathers, as * *Binius* acknowledges; and which is more, that the latter part of this *Epiſtle* (out of which part Mr. *S.* cites theſe words) which contains a *Confeſſion of Faith*, is by * *Baronius* (and after him by *Binius*) proved to have been ſurreptitiouſly added. For though it be found in *Theodoret*, and mentioned by *Sozomen*; yet *Baronius* thinks that it was the *Arian Confeſſion* compoſed by the *falſe-Synod* of *Sardica* which ſate at the ſame time; and that *Sozomen* lighting upon it, perhaps miſtook it for the Confeſſion of the Orthodox Synod of the ſame name. However that be, he proves out of *Athanaſius*, and from the Teſtimony both of the Eaſtern, and Weſtern Biſhops, that the Council of *Sardica did not ſo much as add one word or tittle, no nor ſo much as explain any thing in the Nicene Faith*, But Mr. *White* ſays nothing of this, and therefore Mr. *S.* could not, who is no *Speculator* in theſe matters, but onely as a *Teſtifier delivers down* theſe authorities to us as he *received them by hand* from Mr. *White*; and if the word *Tradition* be but in them, they are *Demonſtrative*.

* Concil. Tom. 1.

* An. 347.

As for his *Teſtimonies* from the *2d* Council of *Nice* (which he calls the *7th General Council*) who pretended their Doctrine of *Image-worſhip* to have deſcended to them by an *uninterrupted Tradition*. and proved it moſt doughtily by Texts of Scripture ridiculouſly wreſted, by impertinent ſayings out of obſcure and counterfeit Authours, and by *fond* and *immodeſt Stories* (as is acknowledged by Pope * *Adrian* the *6th*) *of Apparitions* and *Womens Dreams*, &c. for which I refer the Reader to the *Council* it ſelf; which is ſuch a meſs of Fopperies, that if a *general Council* of Atheiſts had met together with a deſign to abuſe Religion by talking ridiculouſly concerning it, they could not have done it more effectually: I ſay, as for his Teſtimonies from this Council, I ſhall refer Mr. *S.* to that *Weſtern Council* under *Charles the Great*, which a little after at *Franckford* condemned, and alſo fully confuted the Deciſions of this Council, calling their pretended *Tradition of Image-worſhip* [putidiſſimam Traditionem] *a moſt ſtinking Tradition*.

* Quodlibet 6. cited by *Eſpencæus* in *2d* Epiſt. ad Tim. c. 4.

Theſe are his authorities from Councils; *Where* (ſays he) *we ſee General Councils relying on the Teaching of the Fathers or fore-going Church, and on the Churches Tradition as their Rule*, &c. Where does he *ſee*, any ſuch matter? Or where does he *ſee General Councils*? Was the Council of *Lateran* a General one? Or was the Council of *Sardica*? If it was let him ſhew how the 2*d* of *Nice* could be the 7*th General Council.* Mr. *White* muſt write more explicitely, and ſay which are *General Councils,* which not, otherwiſe he will lead his friends into dangerous miſtakes.

§. 4. *After ancient Councils* (not ſo ancient neither) *let us* (ſays he) *give a glance at Fathers. Glance* is a modeſt word, and yet I doubt whether ever the *Fathers* had ſo much as that from him. Before I ſpeak particularly to his Teſtimonies from the *Fathers,* I ſhall mind him of what Mr. *Ruſhworth* ſays in general, *viz.* * *That who ſeeks Tradition in the Fathers, and to convince it by their Teſtimony, takes an hard task upon him,* &c. Again *, *As in other Points, ſo even in this of the Reſolution of Faith, as Doctours ſeem to differ now adays, ſo might the Fathers alſo.* If this be true, Mr. *S.* is not likely by a few Teſtimonies out of the *Fathers* to prove that *Tradition* is the ſole *Rule of Faith.* But let us ſee what he has done towards it.

* Dial. 3. Sect. 13.

* Ibid.

He begins with a ſaying of Pope *Celeſtine* to the Fathers of the *Epheſin* Council. *Now therefore we muſt act with a common endeavour to preſerve things believed, and retained to this very time by ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles. Binius*'s other *Reading* [of διδαχῆς for διαδοχῆς] quite ſpoils the *force* of this Citation which Mr. *S.* puts upon the word *Succeſſion.* But read it how he will; why may not the Chriſtian Doctrine be ſaid to come *by Succeſſion from the Apoſtles,* when it is tranſmitted to us by Scripture, as well as when by *oral Tradition*? I am ſure the ſame *Celeſtine* in an *Epiſtle* to *Cyril,* commends him for defending the Faith by *Scripture, This* (ſays he) *is a great Triumph of our Faith, to demonſtrate our Opinions ſo ſtrongly, and to overthrow the contrary by Teſtimonies from Scripture.* And neither in this *Epiſtle,* nor the other, does he make any mention of *Oral Tradition*

Next he cites that known place in *Irenæus, But what if the Apoſtles had not left us the Scriptures, ought we not to follow the Order of Tradition,* &c? This makes clearly againſt him; for it implies, that now the *Apoſtles* have *left us the Scriptures,* we ought to follow *them.* The other paſſage he cites out of *Irenæus. Lib.* 1. *c.* 3. is a clear eviction that he did not conſult the Book. For he puts two ſayings together which he had met with in Mr. *White* immediately one after the other; and becauſe Mr. *White* had cited *Lib.* 1. *c.* 3. for the firſt ſaying, and brought in the other immediately upon it with an (*Et rurſus*) *Again,* &c. Therefore Mr. *S.* (who is of a right Traditionary temper, which is to take things eaſiely upon truſt himſelf, and require Demonſtration from others) concluded that theſe *ſayings* were in the ſame place, though in truth they are in ſeveral Books. As for the Teſtimony it ſelf, there is nothing in it to Mr. *S*'s purpoſe beſides the word *Tradition,* which *Irenæus* does often apply to Scripture as well as *Oral Tradition*; and there is nothing in this place to determine it to *Oral Tradition.*

His Teſtimonies out of *Origen* will do him leſs ſtead: For every one that hath been converſant in the Writings of that *Father,* knows what he means by the *Churches Tradition* preſerved *by order of ſucceſſion, viz.* The myſtical Interpretations of Scripture, which (he ſays) were delivered by the Apoſtles to the Governours of the Church, and by them down from hand to hand. If this be the *Tradition* Mr. *S.* contends for, *Origen* is at his ſervice; if it be not, I aſſure him he is not for his turn.

Next comes *Tertullian,* concerning whom (as alſo *Origen*) the Papiſt upon occaſion thinks it enough to reply in St. *Hierom*'s words *, *As for* Tertullian, *I have nothing to ſay of him but that he is not a man of the Church.* Whatever he was, theſe are his words, *If thou beeſt but a Chriſtian, believe what is* [traditum] *deliver'd.* And here's nothing again but the word *delivered*; which (as I have ſaid) is indifferent to *Written* or *Oral Tradition,* if the Circumſtances do not determine it to one; as here they do (very unluckily for Mr. *S.*) to the *Scripture.* For he diſputes here againſt *Marcion,* who denied the Fleſh of Chriſt; and who to maintain that, denied his Nativity, and * expunged the whole Hiſtory of it out of the Goſpel; *But* (ſaith *Tertullian*) *by what authority doſt thou this? If thou be a Prophet, foretel ſomething; If an Apoſtle, preach publickly; If Apoſtolical, be of the Apoſtles mind; If no more but a Chriſtian, believe what is delivered.* And where delivered? But in thoſe *Inſtruments* or Books of the Goſpel out of which (as *Tertullian* immediately before tells us) *Marcion* had made bold to expunge this Story.

* Adverſ. Helvid.

* His opinor conſiliis tot Originalia Inſtrumenta Chriſti delere *Marcion* auſus eſt, ne Caro ejus probaretur. Ex qua, oro te, autoritate, *&c.*

As for his Teſtimonies out of *Athanaſius,* the two firſt of them prove nothing but that *Faith comes down from our Anceſtours,* or was by them *delivered to us*; which no body denies: Nor is there a word in either of them concerning *oral,* in oppoſition to *written Tradition.* The third Teſtimony is out of an *Epiſtle* to *Epictetus,* to whom *Athanaſius* writing concerning thoſe who held Chriſt's Body to be Conſubſtantial with his Divinity, tells him this was ſo groſs a conceit that it needed no ſolicitous confutation; but that it would be a ſufficient anſwer to ſay in general the *Orthodox Church was not of that mind, our Fathers did not think ſo.* From whence Mr. *S.* infers that *Tradition is held by him a ſole ſufficient Rule of Faith, and the onely Anſwer to be given why we reject Points from Faith,* &c. But if he had conſulted the Book, he would not have inferred that this was *the onely Anſwer to be given,* &c. For it immediately follows, *But leſt from our being wholly ſilent, the Inventers of evil things ſhould take occaſion to be more impudent, it will be good to recite a few paſſages out of Scripture,* &c. And from thence he confutes them at large. It was ſo groſs an Errour that he thought it might be ſufficient, without bringing particular arguments out of Scripture againſt it, to ſay that it was contrary to the ancient Faith; but yet leſt they ſhould (if he had ſaid no more) have taken boldneſs from thence, and thought that nothing more could be ſaid againſt it, therefore he confutes it from particular Texts of Scripture. And what in his opinion was the *ſufficient Rule of Faith,* Mr. *S.* might have ſeen at the beginning of this *Epiſtle* from theſe words, *That Faith which was profeſſed by the Fathers in that Council* (*viz.* the *Nicene*) *according to the Scriptures, is to me ſufficient,* &c. It ſeems that Scripture was to him the Rule and Standard whereby to judge even the *Creeds* of General Councils.

Mr. *S.* ſays he will be ſhorter in the reſt, and ſo will I. For what is to be ſaid to Teſtimonies brought at a venture? when he that brings them, had he read the Books themſelves, could not have had the face to have brought them. Such is this out of * *Clem. Alexand. As if one of a Man becomes a Beaſt, like thoſe infected with* Circe'*s poyſon; ſo he hath forfeited his being a Man of God and faithful to our Lord, who Spurns againſt Eccleſiaſtical Tradition, and leaps into Opinions of humane Election.* Mr. *S.* knows whoſe way of quoting this is, to pick a bit out of the midſt of a Text that ſounds ſomething towards his purpoſe, and leave out the reſt

* Stromat. L. 7.

which would make it evident to be meant juſt contrary. Yet I cannot charge this wholly upon Mr. *S.* whoſe implicit Faith were it not for his culpable Ignorance might excuſe him. But for his Seducer Mr. *White*, how he can acquit himſelf of ſo foul an imputation, I leave it to any ingenuous papiſt to judge when I have nakedly ſet the whole paſſage before him. *Clement* ſpeaking of Hereticks who relinquiſh from the Scripture, or abuſe it by wreſting it to their luſts, ſays, *Men who deal in matters of higheſt importance muſt need commit great Errours, if they do not take and hold the RULE OF FAITH from Truth it ſelf. For ſuch men having once deviated from the right way, do likewiſe err in moſt particulars; probably becauſe they have not the Faculty of diſtinguiſhing Truths and Falſhoods perfectly exerciſed to chuſe what ought to be choſen. For if they had this, they would be ruled by the Divine SCRIPTURES,* [*Therefore as if any of Mankind*
*φαρμαχθεῖσιν *ſhould become a Beaſt; in ſuch ſort as thoſe who were * bewitched by* Circe; *even ſo he hath loſt his being a Man of God and abiding faithful to the Lord, who hath ſpurned againſt the Tradition of the Church, and skipt into the Opi-*
* αἱρέσεων. *nions of humane Sects**,] (*not* of humane Election, as Mr. *S.* blindly following Mr. *White* does moſt abſurdly tranſlate it) *but he that hath returned from his Errours, and hearkened to the SCRIPTURES, and conformed his life to the Truth, is as it were advanced from a Man to a God.* At the ſame rate he goes on for ſeveral Pages together, taking the Scriptures for an *indemonſtrable Principle*, from which all Divine Doctrines are to be demonſtrated, and for the *Criterion* whereby they are to be tried; and charges the Hereticks in ſuch words as we cannot find fitter for our Adverſaries, *As* (ſays he) *naughty Boys ſhut out their School-maſter, ſo theſe drive the Prophecies out of the Church, ſuſpecting that they will chide and admoniſh them; and they patch together abundance of falſhoods and fictions that they may ſeem RATIONALLY not to admit the Scriptures.* Again, ſpeaking of theſe Hereticks af-
* θεῖα παραδόσει. * δι' ἑτέρων παρεγχειρήσεων. fronting the Scriptures, he tells us *they oppoſe the * Divine Tradition with humane Doctrines * by other Traditions* [*delivered from hand to hand*] *that they may eſtabliſh a Sect or Hereſie.* Again he ſays, *they adulterate the Truth, and ſteal the Rule of Faith,* &c. *but for ORAL Frauds they ſhall have WRITTEN Puniſhments.* But enough of this; whoſoever deſires to ſee more of it, let him read on where theſe men to their own ſhame have directed us, and ſee whether any Proteſtant can ſpeak more fully and plainly in this Controverſie. The whole truſt of the Papiſts is upon the equivocal ſenſe of the word *Tradition.* Which word is commonly uſed by the *Fathers* to ſignifie to us the Scripture or *Divine Tradition* as *Clement* here calls it; but the *Papiſts* underſtand it of their *unwritten Tradition*, and to this they apply all thoſe paſſages in the *Fathers* where Tradition is honourably mentioned. So Mr. *L.* deals with us in the Teſtimonies I have already examined: And there is nothing of argument in thoſe few which remain but from the ambiguity of this Word; which I need not ſhew of every one of them in particular, for whoſoever ſhall read them with this Key will find that they are of no force to conclude what he drives at.

§. 5. As for his Citations out of the Council of *Trent*, by which he would prove it to be the perſwaſion of their preſent Church, that *Tradition* is the ſole *Rule of Faith*; I have already ſhewn that that Council hath declared otherwiſe, and is otherwiſe underſtood by the chief of their own *Writers.* And therefore he did prudently to conceal in an *&c.*

thoſe choaking words, in which the *Council* declares it ſelf to *receive and honour, with equal pious affection and reverence, the Books of Scripture and unwritten Traditions.* And after a deal of ſhuffling, what a pittiful Account is it that he at laſt gives of that Council's putting Scripture conſtantly before *Tradition*, becauſe Scripture being interpreted by *Tradition*; is of the ſame Authority *as if an Apoſtle or Evangeliſt were preſent, and therefore no wonder they honour Scripture-Teſtimony ſo as to put it before Tradition*; which is to ſay, that becauſe Scripture is ſubordinate to *Tradition* and to be regulated by it, therefore it deſerves to be put before it. Beſides if *Scripture* and *Tradition* be but ſeveral ways of conveying the Evangelical and Apoſtolical Doctrine, why ſhould he imagine an *Evangeliſt* or *Apoſtle* to be more preſent by the Scripture than by *oral Tradition*? Eſpecially if it be conſidered, that he ſuppoſes Scripture to be an uncertain, and Tradition an infallible way of conveying this Doctrine.

SECT. II.

Teſtimonies on the behalf of Scripture.

§. 1. ALL that now remains is to confirm the precedent *Diſcourſe* by Teſtimonies of the moſt eminent Perſons of the Church, in ſeveral Ages, in which I ſhall not need to be large, being ſo happily prevented by that full Account which is given, of the ſenſe of the *Ancients* in this matter in the *Anſwer* to *Labyrinthus Cantuarienſis*; which Mr. *S.* may if he pleaſe conſult for his farther Conviction.

§. 2. I begin with the Hiſtorical Account which *Euſebius* gives of committing the *Goſpel* to writing; which is to this purpoſe, *viz.* * *That the* Romans *were not content with the Doctrine Preached, unleſs it were alſo committed to writing; and therefore did earneſtly beg of Mark, Peter's Companion, that he would leave them a Monument in writing of that Doctrine which had been delivered to them by word of mouth. And this was the occaſion of the writing of St.* Mark's Goſpel. *And when* Peter *did underſtand that this Work was publiſh'd (being ſuggeſted by the Divine Revelation of the Holy Spirit) it is ſaid he was very much pleaſed with the ready and earneſt deſire of thoſe Perſons; and that by his Authority he confirmed this Writing, to the end that it might be every where read in the Church.* As for St. *Matthew* and St. *John*, he tells us *, *That of all the Diſciples they two onely have left monuments in Writing; of whom it is alſo reported they betook themſelves to write, being drawn thereto by neceſſity.* Matthew *after he had preached the Word of God to the* Jews, *and was reſolved to go to other Nations, wrote his* Goſpel *in the Language of his Countrey; and thus by the diligence and pains of Writing, did abundantly ſupply the want of his preſence to thoſe whom he left. And when* Mark *and* Luke *had publiſhed their Goſpel, it is reported that* John *(who had always uſed to preach the Word without writing it) being at length wrought upon by the ſame reaſon did betake himſelf to write.* From this account it is clear, that the Apoſtles thought it neceſſary for the preſervation and ſecure conveyance of the Chriſtian Doctrine, that it ſhould be put into Writing; and that they judged this a better way to ſupply the want of their preſence, than *Oral Tradition.* Therefore the ſame *Author* tells us *, *That the Diſciples, who immediately ſucceeded the Apoſtles, as they travelled to preach the Goſpel to thoſe who had not yet heard the Word of* Faith, *did with great* care alſo deliver to them the writings *of the Holy Evangeliſts.* Again *, *That* Ignatius *as he travelled towards* Rome (*where*

* Hiſtor. Eccleſ. l. 2. c. 14.

* Ibid. l. 3. c. 18.

* Ib. c. 31.

* Ib. c. 30.

where he was to ſuffer) exhorted the Churches of every City to hold faſt the Tradition of the Apoſtles; which (as alſo by Writing he teſtified) for greater ſecurity he held neceſſary *to be* copied in Writing.

§. 3. That the Hereticks of Old made the ſame pretence which the Papiſts make now, of *oral Tradition* in oppoſition to *Scripture*, the ſame *Euſebius* tells us; and withal, that *Books* are a ſufficient confutation of this pretence*. *Thoſe* (ſays he) *who were of the Hereſie of* Artemon, *ſaid that all their* Fore-fathers *and the* Apoſtles themſelves *had* received *and* taught *the ſame things which they alſo did*; *and had preſerved the* true Teaching *unto the time of* Victor *Biſhop of* Rome, *whoſe Succeſſour* Zephyrinus *corrupted it. And this* (ſaith he) *would have great probability, were it not firſt of all contradicted by the Scripture*; *and next if there did not remain the Writings of other Brethren much more ancient than* Victor*'s time*, &c. *in the Books of all whom Chriſt's Divinity is acknowledged.* And afterwards he tells us that theſe Hereticks did change and corrupt the Scriptures to bring them to their Opinions; ſo Mr. *S.* tells us that *the outward Letter of Scripture* ought to be corrected *by Tradition and Senſe written in mens hearts.*

* Ibid. L. 5. c. 27.

St. *Hierom* alſo tells us*, That *the Hereticks were wont to ſay, we are the Sons of the Wiſe who did from the beginning deliver down to us the Apoſtolical Doctrine*; but he adds, *that the true Sons of* Judah *adhere to the Scripture.*

* comment. in Iſa. c. 19

§. 4. That Scripture is ſufficiently plain in all things neceſſary.

St. Chryſoſtome*, *All things in the Divine Scriptures are plain and ſtreight. Whatſoever things are neceſſary are manifeſt.*

* In 2 Theſ. c. 2 Hom. 4.

St *Auſtin* having ſpoken of the profoundneſs of Scripture, adds*, *Not that thoſe things which are neceſſary to Salvation are ſo hard to be come at: But* (ſaith he) *when one hath there attained Faith without which there is no pious and right living, there are beſides, many dark and myſterio things*, &c. Again*, *The manner of Speech in Scripture how eaſie is it to all, us though few can penetrate to the bottom of it? Thoſe things which it plainly contains, it ſpeaks without diſguiſe like a familiar Friend to the heart of the learned and unlearned.* How will Mr. *S.* reconcile this with his great Exception againſt Scripture? And what theſe things are, which are *plainly* contained in Scripture, the ſame *Father* tells us elſe-where in theſe words*, *Among thoſe things which are plainly ſet down in Scripture, all thoſe things are to be found which comprehend Faith and good Manners.* The ſame St. *Auſtin* (as alſo *Clement* in the Book which Mr. *White* quoted) for the underſtanding of obſcure Texts of Scripture directs us not to *Tradition*, but to the plain Text without which he expreſly ſays * *there would be no way to underſtand them.*

* Epiſt. 3.

* Ibid.

* De Doctr. Chriſt. L. 2. c. 9.

* De Unitat. Eccleſ. c. 5.

§. 5. That Scripture is ſo plain, as to be fit to determine Controverſies.

Juſtin ſure thought ſo, when diſputing with *Trypho*, concerning a point wherein the *Jew* had *Tradition* on his ſide, he told him *he would bring ſuch proofs* (to the contrary) *as no man could gain-ſay*: *Attend* (ſays he) *to what I ſhall recite out of the Holy Scriptures, proofs which need not to be explained, but onely to be heard.* Mr. *White* might have found likewiſe much to this purpoſe in his *Clement*.

But not to tire my Reader in a Point which the Ancients abound with, I ſhall only produce the judgment of *Conſtantine* * in that ſolemn *Oration* of his to the Council of *Nice*; wherein he bewails their *mutual oppoſitions, eſpecially in Divine things*; concerning which they had *the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit Recorded in Writing*; *For* (ſays he) *the Books of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, and the Oracles of the old Prophets, do evidently teach us what we ought to think of the Divine Majeſty. Therefore laying aſide all ſeditious contention, let us determine the matters in queſtion by Teſtimonies out of the Divine Writings.* Not a word of any other Tradition but Scripture, which was held evident enough in thoſe days, though now Mr. *S.* tells us it is not ſufficient to decide that Controverſie about the *Divinity of Chriſt.*

* Theodoret. Hiſt. L. 1. c. 7.

§. 6. Laſtly, That Scripture is the *Rule of Faith.*

Irenæus *, *The method of our Salvation we have not known by any other but thoſe men by whom the Goſpel came to us, which then they preached, but afterwards by the Will of God delivered it to us in the Scriptures, to be for the future the foundation and pillar of our Faith.*

* L. 3. c. 1.

St. *Cyprian* the Church hath ever held a good Catholick; yet Mr. *S.* * takes notice that he erred in a Point of Faith, and perhaps the rather becauſe Mr. *Ruſhworth* * had told him that he was not theirs in this Controverſie. *For* (ſays he) *St.* Cyprian *ſeems to think that the Reſolution of Faith was to be made into Scripture, and not into Tradition.* But that we may not ſeem to accept of this of courteſie from him, nor yet wholly to deſpiſe it, I ſhall offer this one Teſtimony inſtead of many out of that *Father*; who being oppoſed with an Argument from Tradition, demands *, *Whence have you that Tradition? Comes it from the Authority of the Lord, and of the Goſpel, or from the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles? For God teſtifies that we are to do thoſe things which are written,* &c. *If it be commanded in the Goſpel, or contained in the Epiſtles or Acts of the Apoſtles, then let us obſerve it as a Divine and Holy Tradition.*

* P. 314.
* Dial. 3. Sect. 13.
* Epiſt. 74.

Hilary * commends *Conſtantius* the Emperour *for regulating his Faith only according to thoſe things which are written.* And to oblige him to deſerve this commendation, he adds; *he who refuſes this is Antichriſt, and who diſſembles in it is Anathema.*

* Ad Conſtant.

* *Optatus*, concerning the Controverſie with the *Donatiſts*, asks who ſhall be Judge? and anſwers himſelf, *the Scriptures*: Which he illuſtrates by the ſimilitude of a Father who delivered his Will orally to his Children while he was living, but when he was dying cauſed it to be written *in laſting Tables*, to decide all Controverſies that might happen among them after his death. The paſſage is large, and it is obvious to apply it.

* Lib. 5. de Schiſm. Donat.

Baſil maintaining the *Doxology* as it was uſed in his days, ſays *, *Thus we received it from our Fathers*; but adds immediately, *This is not enough for us, that it is the Tradition of the Fathers, for they followed the Authority of the Scriptuers, making its Teſtimonies the Principles upon which they built.* He has indeed in the ſame *Book* * a paſſage much inſiſted on by the Papiſts concerning unwritten Traditions? but withal he ſays thoſe Traditions were *ſecretly* conveyed, which makes all the reſt of no uſe to Mr. *S.*

* De Sp. Sancto c. 7.
* C. 27.

Chryſoſtome * having mentioned ſeveral Hereſies, directs how they may be avoided *viz. By attending to the Faith delivered, and looking upon all that diſagrees from that as Adulterate. For* (ſays he) *as thoſe who*

in Epiſt. ad
* Hom. 8. 3.
Heb. c. 5.

give Rules do not put men upon a curious inquiry after many meaſures, but bid them keep to the Rule given ; ſo is it in Opinions. But no Body will attend to the Scriptures ; if we did, we ſhould not only not fall into Errors our ſelves, but alſo reſcue thoſe that are deceived. Again *, *If we ſhould be throughly converſant in the Scriptures, we ſhould be inſtructed both in right Opinions and a good Life.* Again, among the many *Sects of Chriſtians* * *it will be eaſie to judge* of the right, *if we believe the Scriptures, becauſe theſe are plain and true ; If any one agree with theſe, he is a Chriſtian ; if he contradicts them, he is far from this Rule.*

* Hom. 52. in Joh.
* Hom. 33. in Act. Apoſt.

St. *Auſtin* calls the Scripture * the *Divine* * *Balance* for the weighing of Doctrines. Again, *the Holy Scripture* (ſays he) *fixeth the Rule of our Doctrine.* And accordingly himſelf uſes it both in his Diſpute with *Maximinus*, to whom he ſays *, *Neither ought I now to alledge the* Nicene *Council, nor thou that of* Ariminum ; *for neither am I bound to the Authority of the one, nor thou of the other. Let us both conteſt with the Authorities of Scripture which are Witneſſes common to us both.* And alſo againſt the *Donatiſts* in theſe words *, *Let them if they can demonſtrate their Church not by the Talk and Rumors* [*or* Oral Tradition] *of the* Africans, *not by the Councils of their own Biſhops, not by the Books of their Diſputers, not by deceitful Miracles*, &c. *but by the preſcript of the Law, Prophets*, &c. *i. e. by all the Canonical Authorities of the Holy Books.*

* De Bapt. Dont. Donat. L. 2. c. 6.
* Contr. Max. L. 3.
* De Unitat. Eccleſ. c. 16.

Hierom *ſaith* *, *Of thoſe things, which without the Authorities and Teſtimonies of the Scripture men invent of their own heads as from Apoſtolical Tradition, they are ſmitten with the Sword of God.*

* Comment. in Agg. c. 1.

Theophilus Alexandr. whom *Hierom* hath Tranſlated, calls Scripture more then once * *the Rule*, and the *Teſtimonies* of it the *firm foundations of Doctrine.* And again ſaith *, *It comes from a Demoniacal ſpirit that men follow the Sophiſms of humane minds, and think any thing Divine that wants the Authority of Scripture.*

* Paſchal. L. 3.
* L. 2.

Theodoret * charges all Hereſies upon the not following of Scripture, which he calls *the inflexible Rule of Truth.* Again, *We have learned the Rule of Opinions from the Divine Scripture.*

* Hæret. Fabul. L. 5.

After the Fathers, I ſhall produce the Teſtimonies of two Eminent Perſons of latter Times, *Gerſon* and *Lyra*

Gerſon in his * *Book of the Tryal of Doctrines*, hath this remarkable paſſage ; *In the Tryal of Doctrines that which is firſt and principally to be conſidered is, Whether a Doctrine be conformable to the* Holy *Scripture, &c. The reaſon of this is, becauſe the Scripture is deliver'd to us as a SVFFICIENT and INFALLIBLE RVLE for the Government of the whole Eccleſiaſtical Body and its Members to the end of the world. So that it is ſuch an Art, ſuch a Rule or Exemplar, that any other Doctrine which is not conformable to it, is to be renounc'd as Heretical, or to be accounted ſuſpicious, or not at all appertaining to Religion. Again,* * *It is evident how pernicious the rejection of the Holy Scripture is, and how certain a preparatory for the reception of Antichriſt. Once more,* * *What miſchief, what danger, what confuſion hath happen'd through contempt of the Holy Scripture, which ſure is ſufficient for the Government of the Church (elſe Chriſt muſt have been an imperfect Law-giver) let us aſk experience, &c.*

* Part. 1. Conſid. 2.
* De Diſtinct. Verar. Viſion. a falſis.
* Serm. in die Circumciſ. &c.

Lyra alſo writes thus * ; *As in Philoſophy truth is diſcovered by reducing things to their firſt and ſelf-evident Principles ; ſo in the Writings deliver'd by the Holy Doctors, Truth is diſcover'd as to matters of Faith, by reducing them to the Canonical Scriptures.*

* Prolog. de Lib. Bib. &c.

Sir, *You know how eaſie it were to ſwell up a large Volume, with Teſtimonies to this purpoſe; eſpecially if I ſhould take the courſe that Mr.* White *does, to hale in quotations though never ſo impertinent; or uſe the wretched importunity which Mr.* S. *does to perſwade them to be pertinent. But theſe Teſtimonies which I have nakedly ſet down, leaving them to ſpeak for themſelves, are enough to ſatisfie an unpaſſionate Reader, ſuch an one as dares truſt himſelf with the uſe of his own* eyes *and* reaſon. *As for that ſort of men which chooſe to follow* noiſe *rather then* light, *we muſt be content to leave them to the blind conduct of thoſe Guides who, having no better means to keep their Followers to them, go* halloing *in the dark, and fill their ears with the inſignificant ſounds of* Infallibility, Indefectibility, Self-evidence *and* Demonſtration

Concerning the Appendix *wherein you are particularly challeng'd, I hope for an Account very ſhortly, and ſo take leave,*

Sir,

Your Affectionate

Friend,

JOHN TILLOTSON.

Lincolns-Inn,
Febr. 20,
1665.

AN

AN Alphabetical Table OF THE Chief *MATTERS*, or *THINGS*, Contained in This VOLUME.

A.

THE God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob. *What the Expreſſion denotes,* 242

Abraham's *Religion: The Antiquity of it,* 315

Adam. *The Firſt and Second* Adam, 322, 323

Æons, *or Ages; what they ſignifie,* 525

Age. *The Goſpel-Age, or Laſt-Age,* 560

Afflictions, 42. *How born,* 65, 136. *Why ſent,* 104, 105. *Whence,* 184, 185

Æmelius. *The Platoniſt,* 556. *He a more indifferent Judge of H. Scriptures than the* Arians *and* Socinians, Ibid. vid. 524, 525

Angels, *and Bleſſed Spirits. The* New *Joy they conceive at Sinner's Repentance,* 174

Angels; *Their Knowledge of Humane Affairs,* 177, 178

Angels; *Their Appearances,* 551. *Chriſt took not their Nature on him,* 552. *And why.*

Angels, *or Dæmons,* 562

Anger. *The Folly,* 51. *and Sin.*

Antiquity. *The Vanity of the Church of* Rome's *pretence to it,* 351

M. Antoninus. *An Excellent Saying of his about the Conſideration of our Ways,* 147

Apollinaris, *and his Followers. Their Hereſies concerning our Bleſſed Saviour,* 524, 553

Apoſtacy. *The Nature of that Sin,* 187

Apotheoſes, *or Canonizing of the Heathen,* 562

Arguments; *how to be uſed,* 245

Arians. *On what Texts of H. Scripture they conceit the Eternal Son of God to be a Creature,* 524. *That falſe Opinion, and the* Socinians *confuted,* Ibid.

Arian *Hereſies,* 728

The Ariſtotelian *Atheiſt,* 8

Ariſtotle, *the Firſt, who Aſſerted the World's Eternity,* 11. *That falſe Opinion fully Anſwered,* in ſeq.

Arnauld (*Monſieur*) *his Ways of Demonſtration of Doctrines rejected,* 299, 300. *His Abſurdities for Tranſubſtantiation,* 306

Aſia *and* Africa. *A Relation of the* Chriſtians *there,* 730

Arts *and Learning; Their Original, and Benefit to Mankind,* 12

Aſſurance. *With reference to a Man's future good Condition, and true Grounds of it,* 170

Atheiſm. *The Kinds of it*, 16. *and the Unreaſonableneſs thereof; particularly of Speculative Atheiſm. The Danger*, 22. *The Folly and Madneſs of the ſame*, 32, 132, 490. *Its Progreſs and Power*, 48. *Deſtructive of Humane Societies*, 310

Atheiſm. *The Unreaſonableneſs of it. See* P. 2, *&c. of the Preface.*

Atheiſts. *Their Miſery here, and hereafter*, 37. *Their vain Opinions when clearly diſcovered*, 753

Atoms, *according to* Epicurus, 14. *His Account in making them the Original of the World, fully Examined*, Ibid. *and Confuted*, vid. 27

The Divine Attributes, 486, &c. *and the Happineſs in firm Belief of them*, in ſeq.

S. Auguſtine *Noted concerning Tradition*, 756

B.

Babylon. *Modern and Myſtical* Babylon, 504

H. Baptiſm, 82, 83, 85. *The Obligation therein*, 83. *and Profeſſion*, 85

Baptiſm. *Infant-Baptiſm*, 370, 624, 625. *Whereon the Benefit of that H. Sacrament depends*, 300, 301

Baſilides, *His Hereſies*, 525

Berengarius, *His Recantation of the Doctrine and Error of Tranſubſtantiation*, 298

Belief, *and Believers: Of what comprehenſive ſignification thoſe Terms are in H. Scripture*, 2

Belief *in Religion: The proper Grounds of it*, 218, 219

Bellarmine's (*Card.*) *Errors for Tranſubſtantiation*, 297. *His two* goodly Marks *of the Church*, Univerſality *and* Splendour, 314

Biſhop *of* Rome, *vid. Church of* Rome, 121. & in ſeq.

Blaſphemous *Thoughts, how miſtaken ſometimes*, 188

Blaſphemy, 185. *Wherein appearing.*

Blood *of Chriſt. Whence called* the Blood of the Covenant, 576, 577

Books. *Pious Books: the Charity in beſtowing them*, 257

C.

Cabala *of the Jews, called* Gematry, 753

Cabala, *or Oral Tradition, of the Jews*, 750, &c.

Cæſar. *Julius Cæſar: A Remark on Him*, 436

Cain *and* Abel's *Sacrifice conſidered*, 249

Canaan. *Land of* Canaan, *a Type: Of what*, 423

Care *of our Souls: the One Thing needfull*, 409, &c.

Carpocrates *Hereſie againſt the Divinity of Chriſt*, 525

Caſaubon (*Dr.*) *Vindicated from* S. S. *Cavils*, 768

Catechiſm. *The Ro. Catechiſm ſet forth by the Council of* Trent; *and what it Teaches of Oral Tradition*, 762

Catechiſing. *The Neceſſity and Advantages*, 235. *Miſery in the Neglect*, 732

Cenſors *of Doctrines at* Rome, 762

Cenſuring *of Others. The Sin*, 165

Ceremonies *of the Jewiſh Religion*, 324

Ceremonies *of the Church*, 604

Ceremonies *of the Church of* Rome: *Their Number and Vanity*, 325

Cerinthus *Hereſie*, 525

Chaldæan *Philoſophy. The Antiquity thereof*, 525

Chance, *could not make the World*, 16

Chance, 434, 438

Charity. *An Eſſential Mark of the True Church*, 126, 127

Charity. *The Want of it in the Church of* Rome, 178

Charity. *The Abuſe of it*, 194. *The Profit in this Life*, 199, 200. *Exhortations to it*, 224

Charity *to our Neighbour*, 203, 440. *The Promiſes made to Charity*, 251

Charity *to the Poor*, 454. *To be joyned with Religious Faſting*, 472, 478.

Charity *to the Poor directed, and the Benefits*, 55, 257

Charity *to Men's Souls, how exerciſed*, 192

Charity. *Whence learnt*, 581, 582

Charity, 372, 413

Charity. *Conceſſions of Charity and Neceſſity. The difference,* 317
Chaſtity, 43, 45
Chialiſts, *in* J. Martyr's *Writings,* 754
Children. *Education of them,* 614. *The Duty and Intereſt therein,* in ſeq.
Children's *Tempers to be known, in order to their good Education,* 637. *Many Arguments brought for the pious Education of them,* 648, 649, &c. *See* 721, 722.
Children *of* Abraham, *who,* 160
Children *of the Devil,* Ibid.
Children *of God,* Ibid.
Chillingworth (W^{m}) *his Writings,* P. 1. *of the Preface.*
Chineſes. *Their Accounts of Years not hard to be reconciled with the Septuagint,* 10
Choice. *What place it hath in Religion,* 602
That Chriſt *was* in the Beginning with God, 525. J. Martyr's *Explication thereof,* Ibid.
Chriſtians. *An Account of Chriſtians in* Africa *and* Aſia, 730
Chriſt's *Incarnation. Of the Nature and Manner thereof from H. Scripture,* 550, &c. *Objections anſwered againſt Chriſt's Incarnation,* 555
Chriſtian *Religion. The Excellency of it,* 59, &c.
Chriſt's *Divine and Humane Nature,* 553, 574. *Proved by H. Scripture by the moſt Ancient Fathers,* 704. *The Doctrine plainly Declared in H. Scripture,* 683
Chriſt, *the Firſt-born of every Creature,* Coloſſ. 1. 528. Socinus *his Interpretations of thoſe Words, rejected,* 529, 531
Chriſt. *His Exiſtence before his Incarnation; ſhewn from many Texts in Scripture,* 540
Chriſt. *His being Born of the Bleſſed Virgin,* 534, &c.
Chriſt. *The Firſt-born from the Dead,* Coloſſ. 1. 18. 529
Chriſt's *unſpotted Innocence, and perfect Obedience,* 572. *His Incarnation, and Inferences thence,* 577. *The Advantages,* 569
Chriſt, *our only Mediator. Inferences from thence,* 569. *Objections Anſwered againſt Chriſt's Incarnation,* 55. *His Humility,* 556. *Sufferings,* 195. *Sacrifice, and the Exceptions cleared,* 578, &c.
Chriſt. *The ineſtimable Benefits by Him to Mankind,* 190
Chriſt's *Example. The Imitation thereof preſſed,* 83, &c. 197
Chriſtianity. *The Rare Precepts,* 31, 59, 62, 63, 70, 81. *Eaſy,* 549
Chronology, 10
Churches. *Building, or Endowing them, a Noble Charity,* 192
Church *of* Rome. *Seperation from it, Defended,* 608, &c.
Church *of* Rome. *The Hazard of Salvation therein,* 119, &c. *Their Uncharitableneſs,* 220, 221
Churches *Humane Authority, by what Means ſupported, according to the* Romaniſts, 763, 764
Church. *The* Weſtern *Church. When moſt Erring and Ignorant,* 761
Church. *The Churches Univerſality,* 314, 372
Commentators *on the H. Scriptures, how to be conſidered,* 703, 704
Communion. *A Perſuaſive to* frequent Communion, 271, &c.
Communion *in one Kind,* 123
Confirmation. *The great Uſe of it,* 636
Conſcience. *Peace of it, how attained,* 6, 25
Conſcience. *The Miſery of an Evil Conſcience,* 19. *Whence,* 153. *The Sorrow,* 334, 467
Conſcience *to be Reverenced,* 466, 467
Conſcience. *The Notion of it,* 459
Conſcience, *void of Offence,* 457
Conſcience. *An Evil Conſcience,* 147, 148, 501, 251, 334, 485
Conſcience. *An Erroneous Conſcience. The Danger in following it,* 460
Conſcience. *The Comforts of a good Conſcience,* 226
Conſideration. *The Nature and Benefit of it,* 140, &c.
Conſideration *neceſſary in Religion,* 30, 31. *Some Arguments to it,* 146, &c. *See* 140. 468, 417

Contentment, 54, 65. *And how Learned,* 73, 135
Controverſies *in Religion, how to be handled,* 196
Controverſies *in Religion, who the proper Judges of them,* 229
Controverſies. *Religious Controverſies, how to be managed,* 599
Controverſies. *To be angry in them; what it implies,* 537
Controverſies *determined by H. Scripture,* 766
Converſation. *What ſort to be uſed before Children,* 644
Converſation. *Civil Converſation. Rules therein,* 516
Converſation. *An Heavenly Converſation. The Happineſs thereof,* 90, &c.
Converſion, *how wrought,* 146
Covenant *of the Goſpel, what,* 83, 84
Counſels. *The Divine Counſels and Actions moſt ſafely to be ſpoken of out of the H. Scripture,* 559
Councils. *What ſort of Interpreters of Scripture,* 709
Councils (*General*) *the Papiſts abſurd Citations for themſelves thence,* 700
Council *of* Trent. *Their Errors,* 304
Covetouſneſs, 660
Creation, 4
Creation *from God,* 7
Creation *of the World, how it proves the Exiſtence of God, and his Power and Goodneſs,* 655
Creation *of the World by Chriſt,* 543, 544
Creation (*Old and New*) contr. Socin. 535, 543
Creation *of Heaven and Earth,* 538
Creator. *The Duty of* Remembring Him, 653, &c.
Credulity *falſely charged on Chriſtian Religion,* 27
Credibility *of divers Things rational; the manner of whoſe Exiſtence we cannot comprehend,* 592
Crellius, *His Wreſting of Scripture,* 544, 545
Curioſity *about others Affairs,* 511
Cuſtom, 660
Cuſtom (*Good and bad,*) 646, 647
Cuſtom. *The Power to Vertue,* 76, 337
Cuſtom *in Sin. The Miſery,* 113. *The Difficulty of being reclaimed from it,* 131, 233
Cuſtom *in Sin,* 152, 153, 176, *The great Power,* 323
Cuſtom *in Sin,* 412
Cuſtom. *Not to follow it in divers Caſes,* 608

D.

DÆmons *of old,* 562
S. David *of* Wales, 258
Death, 374. *Preparation for it,* 417, 465, &c. 156, 264, 265
Death. *Sudden Death,* 258
Death, *and Deſtructions. Their Signification in H. Scripture, and in prophane Authors,* 424
Death-bed *Repentance,* 328
Death *of Chriſt for Sin, how evidently declared,* 575, 576
The Deceitfulneſs, *and Danger of Sin,* 111, &c.
Decrees. *God's Decrees, with relation to Men's State,* 167
Degrees *of future Happineſs and Miſery,* 174, 252, 416, 421
Delay *in Matters of Religion. The Excuſes for it Removed,* 151, &c.
Deliberation. *Rules for it,* 753
Delights. *The Vanity of all Worldly Delights,* 92
Deluges, 11. *The Univerſal Deluge,* Ibid.
Demonſtration. *The Vanity of the Atheiſt in calling for it,* 16, 20
Demonſtration *of Doctrines. The Romiſh Abſurdities therein,* 299. *Their Demonſtrations are falſe Suppoſitions,* 762
Deſpair. *Remedies againſt it,* 186, 187, 337, 407
Devil. *His Dilight in Sin, and Sinners,* 178
Devil. *Chriſt's over-coming the Devil,* 554. *and how.*
Devil, *and his Angels. Their Nature and Character whereby ſeen,* 499
Devil. *His Power over bad Men,* 333, 334, &c.
Devils, 52. Caſting them out, *and by whom,* 183

Devo-

Devotion, 196
Devotion. *External Devotion: The inſufficiency*, 165
Devotion; *Publick and Private*, 411, 412
Difficulty *in Religion, whence*, 331
Difficulty *in Religion, how recommended*, 176
Diligence, 627
Diſeaſes. *How Bodily Diſeaſes overpower ſome with too melancholy Thoughts*, 189
Diſputes *about Religion, how to be managed*, 463
Diſputes. *The Vanity of ſuch Diſputes*, 576
Diſputes *commonly ariſe in Religion from diverſity of the Expreſſions*, 580. *Who not to engage in Polemical Diſputes*, 214, 215
The Divinity *of Chriſt. See* Chriſt *our Bleſſed Saviour*, 523, &c.
Diviſions *in Religion*, 390, 596. *The Deſtruction they brought particularly on the Jewiſh Nation*, 452. vid. 617
Donatiſts. *Their Schiſm*, 372
Doubting. *Men's Doubting of their future good State. The Nature and Redreſs thereof*, 169
Duty of Man. *Wherein it doth conſiſt*, 5

E.

EArly *Piety: The Advantages*, 653
Eaſter. *The Time of it*, 754
Ebion *and* Cerinthus. *Their Hereſies*, 525
Education. *The Happineſs of a Pious Education*, 76, 176, 645. vid. 611
Egyptian *and* Chaldean *Chronology reconcilable*, 10
Eliazer's *Faction before the Siege of* Jeruſalem, 452
Emanations. *Divine Emanations*, 526
Endeavours (*our own*) *to be uſed to a Religious Life*, 77
Enemies. *Who they are*, 398, 399. *Love of them commanded by Chriſtianity*, 63, 64
England. *A Character of the Church of* England, 128, &c.
Enthuſiaſm. *How avoided*, 129, 149
Envy, 197. *The Sin.*
Epicurean's *Account of the Exiſtence of the World*, 14
Epicurean *Atheiſt*, 8
Epicurus *his Opinion, wherein True Pleaſure is found*, 325
Epiphanius *his* Note *of the Corrupt Practice of the Adoration of the Euchariſt*, 125
Eraſmus *and* Thuanus. *The Character of them and their Writings*, 209
Eſau. *What meant by his* Finding no place for Repentance, 180
Eſſenes *among the Jews. How ſtrictly that Sect forbad Swearing*, 231
Eternity. *The Ancient Jews Deſcription of it*, 517
Eſtates, *beſt promoted by Religion*, 53
Euchariſt. *The* Roman *Adoration of it*, 124
Events *do not conſtantly anſwer the Probability of Second Cauſes*, 433
For Ever *and* Everlaſting. *The frequent Importance of thoſe Words in Holy Scripture*, 220, 221
Evil. *What to* depart *from it*, 3
Evil-ſpeaking: *A Sermon againſt it*, 506, &c. *The Nature, Extent and Practice of that Sin. Arguments againſt it. Directions to prevent it.*
Evil *Spirits*, 467
Euſebius *his Character of Unwarranted Tradition in the Church*, 754
Evidence. *How Aſſent grounded thereupon*, 228. *The Properties of good Evidence*, 703
Evidence. *Which ſufficient in Divine Matters*, 712
Eutychian *Hereſie concerning Chriſt's Humane Nature*, 553
Examination. *Self-examination*, 141, 472
Examination *in Matters of Religion, and who can make it*, 219. *The Benefit*, 468
Examination *before the Holy Sacrament*, 282, &c.
Examination. *Self-examination*, 171, 411
Example. *The Power thereof*, 148
Example (*Good*) *the Power*, 192, 193, 615
Example (*Good and Bad*) *the Power*, 632

Example *of Parents. The great Influence of it on Children,* 233
Example. *Chriſt's Example,* 82. *Arguments to follow it,* 197. vid. 66
The Example *of* Jeſus *in* doing Good, 190, &c. vid. 400, 401
Example *of Chriſt. The Imitation thereof,* 568
Excommunication. *The Old Jews Notion of the higheſt Act of Excommunication,* 184
Expiation *for Sin,* vid. *Sacrifices.*

F.

Faith *and Good Works, inſeperable,* 69, 518. *The vain Notion of Faith without Works,* 83, 85
Faith. *The proper Notion of Chriſtian Faith,* 196
Faith. *The Neceſſity of ſuch a Faith,* Ibid. 342
Faith. *See* 410, &c: P. 2. *of the Preface.*
Faith. *The* Rule of Faith, 677, &c. *Miſtakes concerning it,* Ibid.
Faith. *How the True Properties of the Rule of Faith agree to the Scripture, not to Oral Tradition,* 682, 693, &c.
Faith. *The Fundamental Differences amongſt the* Romaniſts *themſelves about it,* 760, 761
Family-*Religion,* 611, &c.
Faſt. *The Nature of a Religious Faſt,* 469, &c.
Faſting to God, *what,* 471
Faſting *and Abſtinence,* 137, 138, 440
Faſts *of the fiſt and ſeventh Months moſt obſervable with the Ancient Jews, and why,* 470
Fate. *The Doctrine of Fate,* 66
Fathers. *The moſt Ancient Father's Appeals to Holy Scripture for the Doctrine they Taught,* 686
Fathers. *What Regard to have to the Ancient Fathers in their Interpretations of Holy Scripture,* 531, 709
Fathers. *A Character of the Primitive Father's manner of Writing,* 537
Faulkland (*Lord*) *his Writing,* P. 2. *of the Preface.*
Fear. *The Influence thereof to render truly Religious,* 3
Fear. *The Atheiſt's Abuſe of that Principle againſt Religion,* 16
The Fear of the Lord, 1. *How to* Fear the Lord, *and to* Depart from Evil, *are ſynonimous Terms, and what they ſignifie in Scripture,* 1, 2. *The Aptneſs thereof to deſcribe Religion by,* Ibid.
Fear of the Lord, 647, 654, 656
Flattery, 467
Fleſh. *What it often ſignifies in Scripture-language,* 523, 524, 552
Floods, 11
Folly *falſely Charged on Religion,* 28, 29
Forgiveneſs *of Injuries,* 396, &c.
Forgiveneſs *of Sins,* 571
Fortune, 496
Fortune. *The Old* Romans *Notions of it,* 436
Fraternal *Correption,* 508
Friendſhip, 164, 403
Friends. *How comforted under the Death of Friends,* 264, 265
Fundamentals *of Religion, where ſet down,* 710
Future *Rewards and Puniſhments,* 227 *See* Happineſs.
Future *State. How Men come to know the Condition of it, with reference to themſelves,* 163

G.

Games, *and Recreations of Children,* 648
Genealogy *of Heathen Deities,* 525, 526
Gibborim, *the Gyants,* 435
Glorifying *God,* 41
Gnoſticks. *Their Hereſie of two Gods, whence,* 59, 60
Gnoſticks. *The Original of that Sect,* 159, 525. *They made uſe of many of* Plato's *Words and Notions,* Ibid.
God. *His Exiſtence,* 16, &c. 37, 217, 585. *The Conſequences of that Belief,* 140. *See* P. 2. *of the Preface.*
God. *His Nature and Attributes,* 13. *Is a Spirit.* 539
God. *His Nature the true Idæa, and Pattern of Perfection of Happineſs,* 482, 500, 501

God. *The Author of the Univerſe, according to the moſt Ancient Philoſophers,* 9
God. *Not Author of Men's Ruin, but themſelves,* 324
God. *His Unity,* 587. *His Unity of Eſſence the Primitive and General Belief of Mankind,* 585
God. *His Nature moſt clearly diſcovered by the Chriſtian Religion,* 60. vid. ſeq.
God. *The higheſt Benefits in Knowing Him, and particularly in Delighting in Him,* 4
God. *The Neceſſity of the Belief of his Being to Humane Society,* 46, 47
God. *His being* the God *of any one, what it implies, with the Jews particular Notion therein,* 245, 246
Gods. *Heathen Gods,* 585
God-fathers *and* God-mothers, 622
Good. *The Diligence to be uſed in Doing Good,* 194, &c. *The Great Delight and Excellence thereof,* 191, 197, 198
Good *and Bad Men. The diſtinguiſhing Character of them,* 159, &c.
Good. *The Temporal Good of Mankind, how to be induſtriouſly ſtudied and promoted,* 193
Good *and Evil. The Difference and Degrees of them to be early Taught,* 648
Goodneſs. *What it is, and wherein Evident,* 501
Goſpel. *The Goſpel-Diſpenſation,* 566
Goſpel, *and Holy Scripture, the only Rule of Faith,* 605. vid. *Faith.*
Goſpel. *The Grace therein as the Remedy againſt all Sin,* 324
Goſpel. *The abſolute Neceſſity of Belief of it,* 28
Government. *The Forms thereof,* 11
Governours. *The Obedience to Spiritual Governours,* 215
M. T. Gouge. *The good Character of Him,* 254, &c.
Grace *of God, with reference to Man's Converſion,* 185, 186
Guilt. *What it is,* 460

H.

HAbits. *The Nature of all Habits,* 332, 333
Habits. *The Difficulties in Reſtraining vicious Habits, and the Remedy,* 331, &c. vid. 146
Happineſs. *God is only the Happineſs of Man,* 482, &c.
Happineſs. *Man's chief Intereſt, and how attained,* 6, 95, &c. 135. *The Eternity of it,* 94. *How much diſregarded, and why,* 370, 373
Happineſs. *Wherein the Principal End of Man,* 409. *Wherein it conſiſts,* 262, 501
The Hazard *of being ſaved in the Church of* Rome, 119, &c.
Health. *Bodily Health, how beſt preſerved,* 52, 226
Heart deceitfull above all things, &c. Jer. 17. 9. *How the Words to be taken,* 164
Heaven. *The Happineſs there,* 81, 100. *How qualified for it,* 664
Heaven. *Whence called a* City *in Holy Scripture,* 90. vid. P. ſeq.
Hebrews. *The Epiſtle to the* Hebrews, *proved to be written by S.* Paul *the Apoſtle,* 529. *Divers paſſages in that Epiſtle freed from the falſe Gloſſes of* Socinians, 545. *S.* Hierom's *Note on the Epiſtle to the* Hebrews, 701
Hebrews. *Their Manner of Expreſſing ſolemn Matters,* 530
Helibaldus (*Biſhop*) *his oppoſing Tranſubſtantiation,* 299
Hell-*Torments,* 7. *The Eternity of them,* 257, 419, &c.
Hereſie. *Who have called the True Religion by that name, and wherefore,* 313
Hereſie. *Which the greateſt,* 412. *The Original and Progreſs of Hereſie,* 729
Hereticks, 372, 413. *Whom the Papiſts account ſuch,* 549
Hereticks. *Baptiſm of them,* 754
Hero's *and* Semi-Dei *of the Heathen,* 572

Hierocles *his Caution againſt Raſh Swearing*, 233
High-Prieſts *under the Law*, 572
Hiſtory. *The Validity of that Teſtimony*, 9. *What kind of Teſtimony from thence for the Holy Scriptures*, 708
Honour, 659, 433. *How attained*, 435
Holy-Ghoſt. *Speaking againſt the Holy-Ghoſt. The Nature of that Sin*, 181, 182, &c. *in a Sermon.*
Holy-Ghoſt. *The Proceſſion of the Holy-Ghoſt*, 736, 738
Holineſs. *The Neceſſity thereof*, 56, 144
Mr. (R.) Hooker's *Character of the Authority of the Church quoted*, 606
Hope. *The Power of that Paſſion*, 77. *How Hope and Fear work*, 732, 733. *How Men's Hopes and Fears are wrought on in the Goſpel*, 64
Humanity. *Wherein appearing*, 197
Humility. *The Advantages*, 73, 462. *How taught by Divine Providence*, 436
Hypocriſie, 166, 467
Hypocriſie *and Prophaneneſs compared*, 49. *The Sin of Hypocriſie deſcribed, with the Danger*, 87, 390
Hypoſtatical, *or Perſonal Union of Chriſt*, 553

I.

I AM. *The Proper Name of God*, 543
S. James *Prohibition of Raſh Swearing, how rendred by ſome Ancient Copies*, 232
Japan. *The People of* Japan, *their remarkable way of Education*, 629
Idolatry, 20, 548. *An Account of the Ancient Idolatry*, 561. *Its pretence to Antiquity, by whom made*, 312. *The Heathens Plea for their Idolatries*, 585
Idolatry *of the Heathen*, 85. *More relation of their bloudy Rites*, 303
Idolatry *and Politheiſm, how introduced and advanced*, 585, &c.
The Idolatry *of the Church of* Rome, 304. *and the Rejection of their Excuſes therein*, 304
Jeremiah. (*The Prophet*) *the Summ of his* Propheſie *and* Lamentations, 473
Jeruſalem. *The Account of its Final Deſtruction out of* Fl. Joſephus, 451, &c.
Jeſus Chriſt. *The indiſpenſible Neceſſity of firm Belief in Him*, 5
Jeſus. *The Example of Jeſus in doing good*, 190, &c.
Jeſuits. *Their pretended Power to Convert*, 311, 435. *Their Writings*, 537
Jewiſh *Cabaliſts*, 525
Jewiſh *Religion*, 61, 62, 560, &c.
Jews. *The Ancient Jews Proſperity*, 45. *The Divine Patience towards them*, 449
Jews. *How they were crucified before their Final Deſtruction at the Siege of* Jeruſalem, 452. *Their Prophanations at that time*, Ibid.
Jews. *Their Sins, and thoſe of Chriſtians, compared*, 452
Ignorance. *Wilfull Ignorance*, 68
Ignorance. *Humane Ignorance*, 59
Ignorance, *and Folly of Sin*, 7
Ignorance. *Sins of Ignorance*, 461
Ignorance *in the Church of* Rome, 215. *Their Sin, who keep Men in Ignorance in Religion*, 343, 344
Ignorance *and Superſtition. In what Ages of the Church moſt prevailing*, 249
Ill-nature *a Cauſe of Evil-ſpeaking*, 509
Image-worſhip *in the Church of* Rome, 114, 297, 586, 608
Imitation *of Chriſt's Example*, 581, 582. *The Obligations and Benefits.*
Imitation *of God, wherein conſiſting*, 499
Impoſſibility. *What that word frequently ſignifies in Scripture, with regard to Vertue*, 332
Impropriations. *Giving in the Impropriations to the Church, a great and excellent Charity*, 192
Incarnation *of Chriſt*, 508
The Indecency *of an Un-holy Life*, 84, 85
Inclinations: *Their Diverſity*, 321. *How amended*, 322
Inconſideration. *Miſchiefs ariſing to Religion from thence*, 227, 328
Indifferent *Things*, 46
Indulgences, 121

Induſtry, 45, 53, 76, 77, 434

Infallibility *of the Church of* Rome. *Divers Modern Author's Opinions thereabout,* 714, 715. *Mr.* William Chillingworth's *Notion vindicated therein,* Ibid.

Infallibility *of the Church of* Rome *confuted againſt all Objectors,* 215. *See* P. 4, 5, &c. *of the Preface. The Differences about the placing it,* 121, 126. *The Vanity of it,* 307, 500

Infallibility *of the Pope Diſclaimed,* 684

Infant-*Baptiſm,* vid. *Baptiſm.*

Infants *Admiſſion to the Holy Communion,* 754

Infidelity, 390. *How advanced,* 464. *The Sin,* 188

Injuries. *Forgiving them, and the Duty,* 73, 230, 204, 396

Inſtruction. *The Benefits to the Souls of Men,* 191

Inſpiration. *Characters thereof,* 209

Integrity. *Good Men often appeal to their own in Holy Scripture,* 165

Integrity, 464, 465

Intemperance, 53. *The Miſery it occaſions,* 325

Intereſt. *The Force of that Principle,* 43

Job's *Integrity,* 465

Job. *The great Excellency and Antiquity of the Book of* Job, 497

S. John (*the Evangeliſt*) *why according to* Euſebius, *He wrote his Goſpel the laſt,* 542

Joſephus (Fl.) *his Obſervation of the Antiquity of the Books of* Moſes, 10. *His Obſervation alſo of the City of* Jeruſalem, *being ſacked on the ſame Day of the Month, by* T. Veſpaſian, *that it was taken by* Nebuchadnezzar, 445

The great Joy *in Heaven at the Repentance of a Sinner,* 172, &c.

Irenæus. *His Miſtake concerning Church-Tradition,* 754, 755

Irreſolution, *and Delay in Religion: The Danger,* 150, 153

Iſraelites *Rebellion in the Wilderneſs, a Type of what,* 423

Julius Cæſar. *An Obſervation on Him,* 430

Julian (*the Apoſtate*) *ſtyles Chriſt the* Meſſias, 525

Judging *in Religious Caſes, who allowed,* 229, 230

Judgment. *How to underſtand the word, as referred to God in Holy Scripture,* 499

Judgment. *Future Judgment, who, and what they are who ſcoff at it,* 34

Judgments. *Their End and Continuance,* 102, &c.

Judgment (*Future*) *Signs of it,* 42. *The Preparation for it,* 156. *The Proceedings,* 253, 261, 374, 375, 376, 419. *How the Conſideration of that Day influences,* 419, 462. *The Reward of Charity to the Poor at the Day of Judgment,* 199

Judgment *of the Church, or Authority thereof,* 606, 607

Judgments *of God, and Divine Patience,* 445, &c. *The End, and Reaſons why ſent,* 102, &c. *The horrid Aggravation of Sin in not learning Amendment by them,* 385, &c.

Juſtice *and Honeſty,* 630, 631, 413

Juſtification, 464

Juſtified. *How the Word taken,* 1 Cor. 4. 4. 464

K.

Key of Knowledge; *what, in* S. Luke, 341, 342

Kingdom of God. *The Acceptations thereof in Holy Scripture,* 139

Kingdom of Heaven. *What to underſtand by it,* 369

Kings. *The* Romiſh *Doctrine of Depoſing them,* 125

Knowledge; *how beſt Attained,* 269, 342

Knowledge *and Practice, how they Promote one another,* 639

Knowledge *in Religion neceſſary,* 220

Knowledge *to be valued from its Object, Uſefulneſs, and Neceſſity,* 5, 6

Knowledge. *The Imperfections of Humane Knowledge,* 495, 525. vid. 160

Knowledge, *ſeparated from Religion, deſcribed,* 197

Knowledge. *Humane Knowledge,* 1

Knowledge *in Religion* (*eaſy*,) 411. *The Atheiſts abuſe of Knowledge*, 1
Knowledge *of the Holy Scriptures. The Neceſſity*, 341
Knowledge *in Religion*, 342, 343
Knowledge *of God's Word*, 341
Knowledge. *What ſort in Heaven*, 93

L.

LAcedemonians. *Their good way of Education of Children*, 640
Laws *Eccleſiaſtical and Civil to be put in Execution*, 475
Laws *againſt Prophaneneſs*, 440
Laws *of Almighty God. Their Reaſonableneſs, and how promoted*, 71, 570
Laws (*Humane*) *and Government*, *how ſupported*, 46, 47
Learning *and Arts. Their Original*, 12
Leſſian *Diet*, 629
Liberty *and Pleaſure*. *The True Nature of them both*, 325
Life. (*Holy*) *The Obligation of Chriſtians to it*, 80, &c.
Life. *An Holy Life. The Obligation of Chriſtians to it*, 80, &c.
Holy Life, *or Goſpel-Converſation. Arguments thereto*, 84, &c.
Life. *The fatal Conſequences of a wicked Life*, 143
Life. *A wicked Life, how much encouraged by the Romiſh Doctrines concerning Repentance*, 121. *The Neceſſity of an Holy Life*, 81, &c. 221. *How promoted*, 251
Life *Everlaſting*, 75
Lipſius (J.) *his mean Opinion on his Death-bed of the Stoic Philoſophy*, 67
Literal *Interpretations of the Holy Scriptures*, 433
Love. *The Power of that Paſſion*, 77. *Love and Fear. Their Efficacy to Obedience*, 77
Love *of one another*, 215, &c.
Love *of God*, 595. *How attained*, 134
Love, *in Heaven*, 93
Love *of our Neighbour*, 396, 397, 595
Love *of our Neighbour*, 215. *The Degrees and Obligations to the ſame*, in ſeq.
Love *of God, and our Neighbour, and how Comprehenſive thoſe Duties are*, 458
Λόγος. *Ancient Philoſophers call God by that Name*, 528
The Lord ſaid unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, &c. *How the Targum of* Jonathan *renders thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt*, 524
Lord's-*Day, how ſtrictly to be kept*, 614, 618
Luther (M.) 609. *His Character of the Pope and Cardinals*, 608
Luther. Where was your Religion before Luther? *The Folly of that Queſtion*, 313
Luſts, 51. *The Grand Enemies of Religion*, 35
Lying, 628

M.

MAccabees. *Their quick Apprehenſions of a future State*, 245
Magicians. Pharaoh's *Magicians*, 228
Magiſtrates *Duty and Power*, 48, 310, 474
Mahomet. *Whence he ſeems to have drawn his Account of future Joys*, 241. *His* Alchoran *calls Jeſus the Word*, 525
Maimonides. *His Rule concerning Oaths*, 230
Maimonides's *Relation of the Oral Tradition of the Law of* Moſes, 753, 754
Malice. *The Sin*, 188, 511
Man's *Miſery by Nature*, 484
The Man of Sin, *who*, 2 Theſſ. 2. 10
Macrobius. *His Plea for the Idolatry of the Heathen*, 585
Manichees *Hereſie of two Beings, or Principles, governing the World, and the Contradiction therein*, 586, 587
Marcion *his Hereſie about Chriſt his Incarnation*, 551
Martyrs. *The Hiſtory of the Holy Martyrs great Pillars of the Proteſtant Religion*, 635. vid. 67, 244
Matter *and Motion conſidered*, 28
M. Mede (Joſ.) *a Miſtake of his relating to* J. Martyr's *Writings of the* Millennium, 757
Mediator, *and Interceſſor, none but Chriſt alone*, 562. *What Thoughts*

to have thence of Him, 567, 584

Mediators. *Who they ſuppoſed to be, among the Ancient Heathen,* 586

Mediators, *among the Papiſts. Which?* 562

Melancholy. *Not from Religion,* 138. *The State and Remedy of a Religious Melancholy,* 169. *How occaſioned often,* 188. vid. 467

Menander's *Hereſie againſt Chriſt's Divinity,* 525

Mental *Reſervation,* 235

Mercies *of God, and their proper Effect,* 386

Meſſiah. *Chriſt the Meſſiah,* 753

Meſſiah, *anciently by the Jews called* the Word, 525, 526

Merit. *The Doctrine of Merit diſclaimed,* 374

The Millennium *in* J. Martyr; *how to be underſtood,* 758

Miracles *of Chriſt. The Heinous Sin to ſpeak againſt them,* 181, &c.

Miracles. *Their Uſe,* 201, 228. *See* 9

Miracles. (*True*) *Which,* 301. *How diſcerned,* 760

Miracles. *The pretended Ones of the Church of* Rome, *and why,* 760

Miracle. *Tranſubſtantiation ſhewed to be none,* 302

Miniſters *of the Goſpel. Their Succeſſion and Maintainance,* 192. *How commanded to call Men to Repentance,* 122. *Their Duty,* 475, 476

Miſhna *of the Jews,* 753

Modeſty, 626

Moral-*Evidence,* 712. *See* P. 3. *of the Preface.*

Moral *Expreſſions and Compariſons, how taken and applied,* 175

Moſes *Law,* 560. *The Jews eſteem of* Moſes *Writings,* 243, 244

Moſes *Hiſtory moſt Ancient,* 10. *The Divine Authority thereof,* Ibid.

Μονογενὴς & πλήρωμα. *The Importance of thoſe words,* 525

Multitude. *Not to follow a Multitude to do Evil,* 235

Municipatus Noſter. *The Phraſe in* Tertullian, *what,* 90

Murther, 422

Myſteries, 525

Myſteries *in Religion, particularly the Chriſtian,* 561. *Incomprehenſible,* 530, 565. *How to think of them,* 500, 501

Myſteries, *and Miracles in Religion of the like Nature, with regard to their Neceſſity and Reaſon,* 559, &c.

N.

Name. *What, to take God's Name in vain,* 235

Name *of Chriſt. What, to* name *the Name of Chriſt,* 2 Tim. 2. 19. 61

Natural *Religion, whence,* 500

Names *of Diſtinction to be laid aſide amongſt Chriſtians,* 455

National *Sins to be lamented, as well as Perſonal,* 471

Nature. *The perfect Knowledge of Nature only in the Author of it,* 1

Nature. *What to underſtand thereby,* 436, 437

Neceſſity *and Power, Neighbours, according to* Pythagoras *ſaying,* 337

Neceſſity. *The Power of that Argument,* 144

Neceſſity *and Fate,* 434, 438

Neceſſity, *and Safety. The Practice of Religion recommended thence,* 328

Neceſſity *but of One Thing,* 409, &c.

Nice. *The Council of* Nice. *A Character of it, with reference to the Worſhip of Images,* 771

Nineveh's *Deſtruction, whence, and how,* 423

How Nonnus *explains* ἐναρχὴ *by* ἄχρονος, 527

Nurſing *of Children by Parents themſelves, enlarged on,* 622, &c.

O.

Oaths. *Their Lawfulneſs to Chriſtians, and Obligation,* 225, &c.

Oaths. *Raſh and Cuſtomary,* 233. *The Sin of them,* 108

Obedience. *The Neceſſity to Salvation,* 170. *Muſt be Univerſal,* 162. *The Poſſibility therein,* 326, &c. 413, 414

Obedience *to the Goſpel, how promoted,* 64, 65

Objections *againſt Religion, how vainly managed,* 754, 761

Obſtinacy, 696
Old-Age. *A Character of it,* 265
Opinions. *The Danger of Obſtinacy in a falſe Opinion. Preface,* P. 1.
Opinions *according to Principles,* 238
Opinions. *Doubtfull Opinions,* 643
Omnipotence. *The Divine Omnipotence,* 44
Omniſcience *of God,* 591
Oracles *of the Heathen, from whence, and why ſet up,* 548, 549
Oral-Tradition. *No Rule of Faith,* 678, 679
Oral, *or Unwritten Law, which among the Ancient Jews,* 753
Origen's *Opinion of Hell-Torments,* 424, 477
Origen's *Opinions concerning the Lord's Supper, and how ſome in the Church of* Rome *miſtake Paſſages of his therein,* 293
Original *Sin,* 321. *Philoſophers apprehenſions of it,* 321
Original *Sin,* 484, 622

P.

Papias. *A Character of him and his Errors,* 754
Papiſts. *Their Uncharitableneſs,* 373. vid. *Church of* Rome.
Parables, *how to be taken,* 173
Parables *in Holy Scripture. Whence variety of them to the ſame End,* 173
The Parable *of the Ten Virgins,* 369, &c.
The Parable *of the Prodigal Son,* 173
Parable *of the Ten Talents,* 372
Pardons *in the Church of* Rome, 306
Parents *Miſcarriages in the Education of their Children,* 642, 643
Parents *Example. The Power,* 643
Parents. *Obedience to them,* 620
Paſſion, 29. *Government thereof to be taught early,* 628, 323
Paſſion. *The Miſchiefs of Inordinate Paſſion,* 460
Paſſion. *None in God,* 173, 174
Paſſover. *The Jewiſh Paſſover,* 29. *A Type of what,* 577
Paſtors *and Teachers in the Church, and their Authority,* 21
Patience, 73. *How learnt,* 65
The Divine Patience, 44. *Sinners Abuſe of it,* 152
The Divine Patience, 337, 384, 388, 445
The Divine Patience. *A famous Paſſage of* M. Antoninus *concerning it,* 407
Patriarchs. *The Ancient Patriarchs. Their Faith and Happineſs,* 246
Peace *from Religion,* 51, 52, 130, 131. *Objections anſwered,* 136, 137. vid. 138, 139, 144
Peace *of Conſcience only in Religion,* 365, 464, 468
Peace. *Publick Peace, how promoted,* 46
Pelagius. *His Hereſie,* 728
Penalties. *Meaſures of them,* 422
Penances *among the Romaniſts, how unavailable,* 163
The Penitent *Thief,* 376. *The Uſe of that Example,* 339
People. *How to prevent the Ruin of a ſinfull People,* 445
The Peoples *Sins,* 476, 477
Perfections *of God,* 4. *What meant by Knowledge of them,* 499
To Periſh, *what, in Holy Scripture, and other Writings,* 424
Perjury. *The Sin,* 233, 234, &c. *The Ruin of Societies,* 236
Perſecution, 2, 203, 369, 500 *The Caſe of Perſecution for Religion ſtated,* vid. 137
Perſecutions *and Sufferings,* 75, &c. *The Ancient Jews and Philoſopher's Notions of them,* 558
Perron (*Card.*) *his groſs Abſudities for Tranſubſtantiation,* 306
Perſians. *Their Education of Children,* 640
Pharaoh's *Sin,* 385, 386
Phariſees, *how reproved in Holy Scripture,* 172, 174. *Their Sinning againſt the Holy Ghoſt,* 183. *Their falſe Notions about the Joys hereafter,* 241
Phariſees *and* Sadduces. *Their Notions about a Future State,* 243
Philoſophers *of old Taxed,* 406
Phineas. *His Act in executing Judgment,* 448

Plato *makes the* Word *the Principal, or Efficient Cauſe of the World,* 525
Pleaſure *in Religion,* 51, 74. *only to be found therein,* 137, 162, 258, 433, 501
The Pleaſures *of Vertue and Vice compared,* 78, 79
Pleaſure. *True Pleaſure not taken away by a Chriſtian Courſe of Life,* 324, &c.
Pleaſure. *Senſual Pleaſure. The Miſery therein to Youth,* 658, 660
Polygamy, 496
Political *Wiſdom,* Ibid.
Polytheiſm, 19, 20, 734
Polytheiſm *inferred by the* Socinian *Doctrines,* 537, 585
Ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ. *That Phraſe, what,* 187
Poor. *Charity to them,* 193. vid. *Charity.*
Popery. *How deſtructive of Chriſtianity,* 307
Pope Jone. *Divers* Romiſh *Writer's Account of that Pope,* 761
Pope Pius *IV. His new Articles of Religion,* 314, 315
Pope's *Supremacy,* 352
Pardons, 379
Popes. *A Character of divers Popes of the ninth and tenth Age, and thoſe ſucceeding,* 742
Popes *and Cardinals,* 48
Poſſibility *of all Chriſtian Duties,* 73, &c.
Poſſibility *of Salvation in the Church of* Rome. *That Argument weighed,* 128, &c.
Power *and Neceſſity are Neighbours according to* Pythagoras, 337
Praiſe *and Thankſgiving,* 502
Prayer, 2, 51, 71, 73, 160, 273, 440, 595, 612
Prayer *to God. The Grounds of it,* 436, 583
Prayer. *Forms of Prayer to be taught Children,* 639, 641
Prayer, *how made acceptable,* 479, 480. *How available,* 193. *The proper and only Object of Prayer, againſt the Papiſts,* 491, 492
Prayer. *How to be performed,* 342, &c.
Prayers *in an Unknown Tongue,* 500
Precepts. *The Divine Precepts, for the moſt part, Negatively expreſſed,* 4
Predeſtination, 138
Prejudice, 29, 36, 41, 146, 188, 191, 339, 461, 468, 535, 704, 746
Preſumption, 414
Preparation, *what,* 371
Pride, 73, 462
Prieſts. *Romiſh Prieſts. How the Reverence of them raiſed,* 301
Prieſts *and Monks,* 729
Primitive *Chriſtians, how ſupported under Sufferings,* 465. *Their manner of Worſhip out of* Pliny, 83
Principles. *Falſe Principles,* 467
Principles. *The Neceſſity of Teaching the Principles of Religion,* 638
Probability, 29, 38. *How to be weighed,* 8. *A good Argument,* 20
Prodigal *Son. The Parable of the Prodigal Son,* 144, 177, 449
Profaneneſs, 49, 390
Profeſſion. *Outward Profeſſion of Religion,* 57, 58, 370
Promiſes, *and Threatnings of the Goſpel,* 56, 81. *Their End,* 82
Promiſes *made to the Patriarchs. The quality of them,* 247, &c.
Propagation *of Mankind,* 14
Prophets. *Falſe Prophets,* 224, &c.
Proſperity *of the Wicked,* 44, 248. *No Argument againſt a Divine Providence,* 483
Proteſtant *Religion. The Antiquity thereof,* 314, &c.
The Proteſtants *in* England, 456
Proverbial *and Moral Sayings, how to be taken,* 130. *The Notion of* Ariſtotle *therein,* 621
Proverbs *of* Solomon, *how many of them to be rightly underſtood,* 175
Providence *of God,* 4, 217, 227. *Neceſſity of the Belief of it,* 22, 44, 45, 248, 431, 491
Providence *of God, how ſeen in preſerving the Holy Scriptures,* 709. *Wherein alſo viſible,* 504
Puniſhment. *Temporal Puniſhment, with relation to pretended Religious Doctrines,* 303
Purgatory *Diſproved,* 119, 121, 128, 263, 264
Pythagoras. *His two Precepts of Vertue to his Scholars,* 337. *Alſo his Doctrine concerning the Reaſonable-*

neſs of vertuous Actions, 79. *His Rule of Self-examination*, 141. vid. 525

Q.

Quarrels. *See Controverſies and Diſputes.*

R.

Rabanus Maurus. *A remarkable Paſſage out of him of the Novelty of Tranſubſtantiation*, 297, 298
Rabbi Jonathan. *His Rule about Swearing*, 230
Ratramus, *or* Bertram; *His oppoſing the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation*, 299
The Race is not to the ſwift, *&c.* Eccleſ. 9. 11. *How the Chaldee Paraphraſt reſtrains thoſe words*, 432
Reaſon. *The Way and Excellence of Conformity to Right Reaſon*, 134
Reaſon. *How refined*, 51
Reaſon *in Religion*, 88, 547, 589, 704, 705
Reaſonings. *The wiſeſt and ſureſt grounded on the Divine Perfections*, 500
Redemption *of the World by Chriſt*, 4. *The Univerſality thereof*, 487
Reformation. *Whence the Goſpel called* the Time of Reformation, 313
Reformation *of the Church. Novelty vainly objected againſt it*, 315
Reformation *of Religion in* England, *with the Character of ſome Excellent Perſons concerned highly in it*, 604
Reformation *of Vicious Habits. The Difficulty*, 33, &c.
Relations. *Their Welfare promoted by our Religious Practice*, 54, 55
Religion. *The Advantages of it to particular Perſons*, 50, &c.
Religion. *The whole of it often intended in Holy Scripture by ſome part of it*, 2
Religion. *The beſt Knowledge and Wiſdom, and whence it is ſo*, 4
Religion. *Natural Religion*, 20, 226
Religion. *The Aſſured Benefits in the Practice thereof*, 39. *How advantagious to particular Perſons*, 50. *The Neceſſity of it*, 41
Religion. *No politick Invention*, 47
Religion. *How it improves Men's Underſtandings*, 50, 51
Religion. *Conſtancy in Religion*, 129
Religion (*eaſie to be obſerved*,) 137, 145, 414, 661
Religion. *The Means therein appointed to be looked to*, 196
Religion (*ſome kind*) *profeſſed by all*, 309, 310
Religion. *How the Choice of it to be ordered*, 310. *The Propagation of Religion*, 311
Religion. *The Powers of the Pre-poſſeſſions of a falſe Religion*, 312
Religion. *The pretended Difficulties to the Practice anſwered*, 320, &c.
Religion. *How that the Principles of Religion to be taught Children by degrees*, 640
Reliques *of the Papiſts*, 306
To Remember. *What the word imports often in H. Scriptures*, 654, &c.
Repentance. *The Danger of Delaying it*, 33, 117, 145. *The Errors of the Papiſts about it*, 121. *The Pleaſure in Repentance*, 139
Repentance. *The Nature of it*, 141
Repentance. *The pretended Trouble, and Difficulty there is in it*, 152
Repentance. *Many Arguments againſt the Delaying it*, 158, &c. *Miſtakes concerning Repentance*, 166. *How Repentance is to be expreſſed*, 167, 168
The Repentance *of a Sinner, and the Joy from thence in Heaven*, 172, &c. 180
Repentance. *Precepts of Jewiſh Maſters concerning it*, 676
Repentance. *The Methods of proceeding therein, compared*, 176
Repentance. *The Caſe of a late Repentance*, 339
Repentance, 472. *How called to it*, 445, &c. *Not to be put off*, 375, &c. 662, 663
Repentance. *The Conditions of True Repentence*, 499
Repenting, *how applied to God*, 447
Reproof. *How to be ordered*, 192. *The Neceſſity of it*, 508

Reproof *and Correction of Children,* 633, 634, 644
Reprobation, 166
Reputation *gained by Religion,* 54
Reſolution. *The Power,* 337
Reſolution *in Religion,* 48, 323, 379, 380, 416, 601, &c.
Reſurrection, 241, 262
Reſurrection *of the Body,* 242, 558
A Reſurrection *a principal Doctrine both of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian Religion,* 457. *The mighty Power of the Conſideration of it to a good Conſcience,* 463
Reſurrection *of the Fleſh.* J. Martyr's *account of ſuch who denied it,* 756, &c.
Revenge, 52, 53, 397, 511, 513. *The Reaſonableneſs of that Duty,* 73. *No Pleaſure in Revenge,* 325
Revelation. *Divine Revelation founded on the Divine Perfections,* 500
Revelations. *Which be Divine Revelations,* 226. *Certainty thereof,* 582. *The Uſe of Humane Underſtanding therein,* 226
Rewards. *Future Rewards,* 74, 75, 26, 29, 32
Rewards *and Puniſhments hereafter,* 56
Riches, *how obtained,* 433. *The Vanity of Glorying in them,* 498
Rich *Man, and* Lazarus. *The Deſign of that Parable,* 263
Righteouſneſs. *The true Notion thereof in God's Word,* 43
Righteouſneſs. *The meaning of Doing Righteouſneſs in the Scripture,* 161
Righteouſneſs, *as referred to Men, how to be underſtood,* 174
Righteouſneſs. *How to be taken, with relation to Almighty God,* 419
Righteouſneſs, *and Wickedneſs; The Difference of Men's State according to the Exerciſe of them,* 419
Romans. *Whence the Proſperity ſo great of the Ancient* Romans, 44, 45
Romans. *Their Siege of* Jeruſalem *under* Titus, 452
Romiſh *Writers. How many of them rejected by the Romaniſts themſelves,* 761
Rome. *The Practices of the Church of* Rome, *how corrupt,* 123, 209, &c. *The Romaniſts way of introducing Practices in Religion.* 300
Rome. *How Erroneous the Church of* Rome *is, though allowed to be a Church,* 316, 317. *How corrupt by reaſon of falſe Interpretations of Holy Scripture,* 549
Romiſh *Doctrines. Their Abſurdity,* 605
Rome. *The Church of* Rome's *pretended Infallibility,* 609
Romiſh *Church. A full Account thereof in the* 9, 10, *and ſucceeding Ages,* 743, 744
Romaniſts *no Chriſtians, from the Conſequences of ſome of their own Champions,* 768. *How by Arts they keep their Followers to them,* 779
Ruin *of a ſinfull People,* 445, &c.
Thou ſhalt not ſpeak Evil of the Rulers of thy People; *How* Joſephus *renders thoſe words,* 37
Ruſhworth (M.) *who eſteem his Dialogues,* 342. *See the Preface of the Abſurdities therein.*

S.

SAbbaoth. *The Prophanation thereof, and the Sin,* 474, 475
Sacrament (*Holy*) *of the Lord's Supper,* 172, 268, 271, 301, 458. *Preparation,* 273, 466, 660, 614, 325. Vid. 82, 122, 406
Sacraments. *Whereon their Efficacy doth not depend,* 500
The Sacrifice, *and Satisfaction of Chriſt,* 570, &c. *Proved againſt the* Socinians *fully,* Ibid.
Sacrifices *of old,* 561. *Jewiſh and Heathen,* 572
Sacrifice *and Propitiation of Chriſt,* 584
Sacrifices. *The Nature and End of Expiatory Sacrifices,* 577
Saints (*Departed.*) *Their Knowledge of Humane Affairs,* 178
Salt. *What that word implies in the Goſpel,* 455
Samaritanes, *who,* 202. *Their Differences with the Jews, whence,* Ibid.
The Satisfaction *of Chriſt,* 573, &c.
Scandal. *The Scandal brought on Religion by a Wicked Life,* 86, 87
Scepticiſm, 8, 13, 696, 712
Schiſm, 312. *The Danger,* 608. *The*

Notion

Notion according to the Papiſts, 705

Schiſm, *how prevented by Catechiſing*, 635

Schlictingius *Rejecting the moſt Ancient Interpreters of Scripture noted*,

Schlictingius *perverting the Chaldee Paraphraſe to his Opinions*, 535 537

School-men. *A Character of them*, 344

Schools. *The Speculations of the Schools noted*, 588, 589

Schools *of Learning. Founding them, and the Excellency of the Charity*, 192

Scoffing *at Religion. The Nature of that Sin, and Aggravations of it*, 34

Scoffing *at Religion. The Sin and Cuſtom*, 48, 188

Scribes *of old, who*, 34. *Their Character*, 475

Scotus (*Duns*) *his Opinion of the Abſurdity of Tranſubſtantiation*, 759, 760

Scotus (Jo.) Erigena. *His Oppoſition of Tranſubſtantiation*, 299

Scriptures. *The horrid Abuſe of Holy Scriptures*, 41, 49, 189

Scriptures. (*Plain*) 215, 575. *How Figurative Expreſſions therein to be taken*, 227

Scriptures. *The Interpretation of them*, 227, 526, 539

Scriptures *Perfection*, 344. *How earneſtly the Ancient Fathers exhort to Reading them*, 344, 346

Scriptures *Obſcurity anſwered*, 344

Scriptures. *The Wreſting them by the Ignorant not the true Cauſe of Hereſie*, 350

Scriptures. *Of the Literal Interpretations of Holy Scriptures*, 433

Scriptures (*Holy*) *in an Unknown Tongue*, 500. *Pretences for it*, 347

Scriptures. *Their Divine Authority and Sanction*, 549, 684, 685, 698, &c.

Scriptures, *how perverted by the Papiſts*, 680, &c.

Scriptures. *Their Style*, 683. *The Primitive Chriſtians Love of the Scriptures*, 686

Scriptures. *In what Ages firſt denied to the People in a known Tongue*, 345

Scriptures. *The Holy Scriptures, when, and why written*, 688

Scriptures. *Not to be interpreted by Oral and Practical Tradition*, 691, 692

Scriptures. *Cavils of* Roman *Adverſaries anſwered*, 700. *Their Differences about Interpretation of them*, 705. *The Original and Tranſlation of them againſt the Papiſts*, 702

Scriptures. *Eaſie to underſtand, with reference to Faith and Manners*, 706, 710

Scriptures. *The Miſeries by miſtaking them*, 711

Scriptures. *All Objectors may be anſwered by them*, 719

Scriptures. *Uncorruptneſs and Certainty*, 720

Scriptures. *The Holy Scriptures* the Rule of Faith, 777, 778

Seaſons. *How the Change of them proves a Divine Providence*, 497

Seculum Spiritûs Sancti *of the Enthuſiaſts*, 772

Sects. *Wherein their Heat and Fury principally ſeen*, 303

Sects, 539

Seditions. *The Miſeries*, 452

Self-confidence, 439

Self-denial. *The Reaſonableneſs of that Duty*, 73

Semi-dei, *and* Deaſtri *of the Heathen*, 585

Seneca. *The Philoſopher. His Character of Sin*, 226

Senſes. *Outward Senſes, what Power they have in Religious Doctrines*, 304. *The Abſurdity of thoſe who reject them in ſeveral Inſtances*, 702, 762

Sermons. Eraſmus *his Character of Popiſh Sermons*, 349

Servants. *Care of them*, 613

Service. (*Divine*) *in an unknown Tongue*, 123. Eraſmus. *His Note thereon*, 346. Vid. *Prayers*.

Severity. *To Children*, 644, 645

Shame. 3. *For ſin*, 143. *The reſtraint thereby from Vice*, 335

Simon Magus. *His Hereſies*, 159, 160

Sin. *Forſaking it*, 3

Sin. *The Unprofitableneſs of Sin*, 57, 58. *How Men advance in Sin*, 112, 113

What,

What, to be hardened in Sin, 115 *The Evil and Unreaſonableneſs of it*, 143, 334. *What, the Commiſſion of Sin ſignifies*, 161

Sins. (*Wilfull and of Infirmity*) 167

Sins *of Omiſſion, and Commiſſion, with the certain Danger of both of them*, 169

Sin. *Deliberate Sin. How ſome miſtake it*, 188

Sin. *The Degrees and Approaches of it to be avoided*, 188, 189, 639

Sin. *God not the Author of it*, 321, &c.

Sin. *The Guilt and Miſery of Sin*, 384, 385, 501, 570, 743. *How deliver'd from Sin by Chriſt*, 572

Sin. *The Aggravations of Sin*, 421

Sin. *Expiation thereof by Chriſt his Sufferings*, 573, 574

Sinners. *Whence the greateſt to be encouraged to Repent*, 173

Sinning. *Divers Arguments againſt it*, 581

Singularity, *and Novelty. The Religion of Proteſtants fully vindicated from that Charge*, 308, &c. 27

Sincerity, 467, 468, 660. *How known*, 164

Sirmondus. *A Note of his concerning Tranſubſtantiation found abſurd*, 267

Slander, 307

Societies. *The Advantage of Religion to them*, 43, &c.

Societies. *How ſupported by Religion*, 22, 43, &c. 225, 236, 310

Socinians. *Their Manner of Writing*, 537. *How they wreſt the Holy Scriptures*, 527. *Whence their Opinions*, 525. *The Novelty of their Doctrines and Interpretations*, 534, 538

Son of Man. *What to ſpeak againſt Him, and what to ſpeak againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, Matth. 12. 31. 181

Sorrow *for Sin*, 143

Soul *of Man. The Immortality of the Soul*, 7, 26, 50, 242, 243. *Its Active Nature*, 3. *and Happineſs*, 6

Soul. *The Cares for the Soul, the one Thing needfull*, 409, &c.

Souls *of Men. Their Salvation how to be ſought*, 179

Souls *of Men. The Ways of doing good to them*, 191

Soul. *The Sleep of the Soul till the General Reſurrection, confuted*, 262, 263

Let my Soul depart from thee. *How rendred in the Hebrew*, 446

Souls. *That word uſed ſometimes in Holy Scripture for Perſons*, 553

Speculation. *The Vanity of it without Practice*, 639

Speech. *The right Uſe of it*, 513

Σφραγὶς. *The Notion in that word; as* 1 Tim. 2. 80

Spirit. *The Bleſſed Spirit. His Aſſiſtances*, 26, 73, 145, 322, 337

Spirit. *The* Teſtimony, Seal, *and* Earneſt *of the Holy Spirit, what in Scripture*, 168, 262. vid. *Holy Ghoſt*, 181, &c.

Spirits. *The Trial of them, whence enjoyned*, 209

The Stars in their courſes. *Whence ſaid to fight againſt* Siſera, 435, 498

State. *A future State, and what Conſiderations to have from that Doctrine*, 250, &c. *Wherein the State hereafter is different from the preſent*, 241

Stedfaſtneſs *in Religion*, 210, 211

Stillingfleet (*Biſhop*) *his Writings*. Vid. P. 2. *of the Preface*.

Stoic *Philoſophy concerning Bearing Afflictions*, 65, 66. *The Imperfection thereof*, Ibid.

Styx. *Why the Heathen Gods did ſwear by it according to* Ariſtotle, 9

Succeſs. *Not always anſwerable to the Probability of Second Cauſes*, 430

Succeſs. *No ſure Argument of a Good Cauſe*, 504

Sufferings *of Chriſt*, 556, &c.

Superſtition, 44, 373, 378. *And how avoided*, 44

Supremacy *of the Pope, by what vaſt Numbers of Chriſtians rejected*, 314

Swear not at all, *Matth*. 5. 33. *Thoſe words interpreted*, 229, 230

Swearing. *The Sin and Miſery of Raſh Swearing*, 232

T.

Teaching. *The outward Teaching of God's Word*, 273
Temperance, 45, 63, 71, 412, 629
Temptation, 369
Temptations to *Sin, how conquered*, 73, 144, 151. *The Power and Remedy of Temptations*, 222, &c. *The Miſeries in yielding to Temptations*, 338
Temptations *of Satan*, 39
Tenderneſs *and Pity*, 628
Teſtimony. *The Kinds*, 9
Teſtmony. *The Validity of Humane Teſtimony. See* P. 5. *of the Preface.*
Thankſgiving, 612
Thankſgiving *to God*, 383, &c.
Θεμέλιος. *The Uſe of that word in the Epiſtles to* Timothy, 80, 251, 252
Theodoret (S.) *A famous Paſſage out of Him againſt Tranſubſtantiation*, 759
Things *neceſſary*, 766, &c.
Thoughts. *Blaſphemous Thoughts, by whom ſometimes miſtaken*, 188
Thuanus *and* Eraſmus. *A ſhort Character of them*, 209
Time. *The Improvement of Time*, 155
Time. *To what ſort of Perſons burthenſome*, 329
But Time and Chance hapneth to them all, *Eccles.* 9. 11. Aben-Ezra's *Interpretation of thoſe words*, 432
Tongue. *The Government of the Tongue*, 506, &c. 513, 628
Torments. (*Future*) *The Fear of them, how avoided*, 133
Ἐν τούτω. *That Phraſe explained*, Acts 24. 16. 458. *See* 160.
Tradition. *Univerſal Tradition*, 9, 18
Tradition. *Oral Tradition among the Ancient Jews*, 243
Tradition. *What Proteſtants allow to Oral Tradition*, 687, &c.
Tradition. *The Authority of General Tradition*, 546
Traditions. *Their Failing*, 735, &c.
Traditions *of the Church of* Rome, *and what Churches diſown them*, 730
Tradition. *The Romaniſts pretence, that Oral Tradition is not the only Rule of their Faith*, 762
Tradition. *Mr.* Ruſhworth's, *and* S. S. *Abſurdities about Oral Tradition, ſhewed in their Conſequences*, 768
Tradition. *No certain Rule*, 723, 724
Traditions. *Popiſh Traditions are Innovations*, 753
Tradition. *Card.* Bellarmine's, *and Card.* Perron's, *and Mr.* Knot's *Marks of Oral Tradition*, 763
Tradition. *The vain Reliance on it*, 764, 765
Tradition. *Apoſtolical Tradition*, 765, &c.
Tradition. *Pretended Authorities for Popiſh Tradition anſwered*, 769, &c.
Tradition. *Their Temper, who contend moſt for it*, 772
Tradition. *How the Papiſts rely on the Equivocal ſenſe of the word*, 794
Tranſubſtantiation, 122, 228, &c. 605, 740, 747
Tranſubſtantiation. *When the Erroneous Doctrines therein aroſe*, 296 *Cardinal* Bellarmine's *fond Obſervation for the Antiquity of it*, 297 *The Pretences alledged for Tranſubſtantiation anſwered out of the Ancient Fathers of the Church*, 288, &c.
Tranſubſtantiation. *The Original thereof both in the Greek and Latine Church*, 297. *The Scandal and Abſurdity of Tranſubſtantiation*, 302, &c. *How it overthrows the Faith of Miracles*, 305. *How diſclaimed by the outward Senſes*, 305 *Wherefore that Doctrine maintained by the Council of* Trent, 306. *How the Church of* Rome *endeavour to uphold Tranſubſtantiation, and the Fate of it*, 306. *Their Arguments ſilenced*, 593, &c. Scotus (D.) *his rejecting Tranſubſtantiation*, Ibid.
Tranſubſtantiation. *The owned Newneſs of the Word, and further of the Falſeneſs and Abſurdity of it*, 759
Tranſubſtantiation. *See* P. 4. *of the Preface.*

Trinity. *The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity*, 307, 527, 537. *Arguments brought to Aſſert that Doctrine*, 546, &c. 583. *A large Confutation of the* Socinians *Errors therein*, 588, &c. *further ſhewn and confuted*; in ſeq.

Troubles, *how beſt avoided*, 131

Truth, 413. *How to be entertained*, 189. *See* P. 7. *of the Preface.*

Truth. What it is, *and the Sinfulneſs of reſiſting it*, 188. *How to be received*, 548

V.

Virtue *and Vice, no Arbitrary Things*, 47

Valentinus *his Hereſie againſt Chriſt's Divinity*, 525

Victory *over Enemies, how obtained, and ſecured*, 433

Virgin. (*Bleſſed*) *The Romaniſts Adoration of Her*, 592, 493

Ulpian (*The Rom. Lawyer.*) *His Obſervation concerning Raſh Swearing*, 233

Unbelief. *The Nature of that Sin*, 187

Unction. *Sacrament of Extreme Unction*, 377

Underſtanding *and Knowledge. Whence joyned together in Holy Scripture*, 499

Unity. *Exhortations to it*, 455

Unity *in the Church*, 350

Unity *of the Divine Nature*, 583

Univerſality. *No inſeperable Property, or Mark of the True Church*, 313 *Cardinal* Bellarmine's *Error therein*, 314

Vows. *Religious Vows*, 142

W.

WAR. *Succeſs therein*, 433 *To have a good Cauſe*, 438 *The Events of War prove a Divine Providence*, 497

War. *The Holy War*, 747

Way. *The Signification of that word often in Holy Scripture*, 141

Waſhing *of Hands among the Jews*, 754

Watchfulneſs *in Religion*, 378

Dr. B. Whichcot. *The Sermon at his Funeral, and Character of Him*, 260, &c.

Will *of God* (*Secret and Revealed*,) 145

Will. *Freedom thereof*, 33, 308

Wiſdom *and Underſtanding have ſometimes different Notions in Holy Scripture*, 1

Wiſdom. *True Wiſdom; wherein it conſiſts*, 33

Wiſdom *and Righteouſneſs, how taken in the* Proverbs, 43, 131. *How they import the ſame thing very often*, Ibid.

Wiſdom. *A Character of the Counſels of Wiſdom*, 171

The Wiſdom *of being Religious*, 1, &c.

Wiſdom *and Valour. Why no Temple dedicated to them heretofore in* Rome, 436

Wit. *The Uſe and Abuſe of it*, 40, 42

The Word was made Fleſh, *S.* Joh. 1. 14. *What that Expreſſion doth ſignifie*, 523

Word. *Why that Name, or Title, given to our Bleſſed Saviour*, 524, 525

Works *of Supererogation*, 371, 374, 377

World. *The Eternity of the World refuted*, 7, &c. 12

World. *The undue Love of it*, 412, 418

World. *Chriſt his overcoming it*, 554

Worſhip *of God*, 2, 374, 400, 595

Worſhip *of God. The Bleſſed Deſign of it out of* Lactantius, 390

Divine Worſhip. *God the only Object thereof*, 595

Worſhip. *The Publick Worſhip of God, how Children to be Educated in it*, 639. vid. 638

X.

XEnophon. *His Way of Education of* Cyrus, 460

Y.

Youth. *Education of Youth*, 636, &c. *The Education of poor Youth, and the Excellency of that Charity*, 193. *An Example of it*, Ibid. *Why Youth bound to* remember their Creator, 657, &c.

Z.

Zeal *in Religion*, 48, 416
Zeal *for Religion*, 205: *The Romaniſts Abuſe of it*, Ibid.
Zeal (*True and Falſe*,) 413
Zeal. *The Miſeries from a furious Zeal*, 461, &c.
Zealots. *A Character of them*, 510
Zealots, *who a little before the Siege of* Jeruſalem, 451
Ζωὴ & λόγος, *what*, 525

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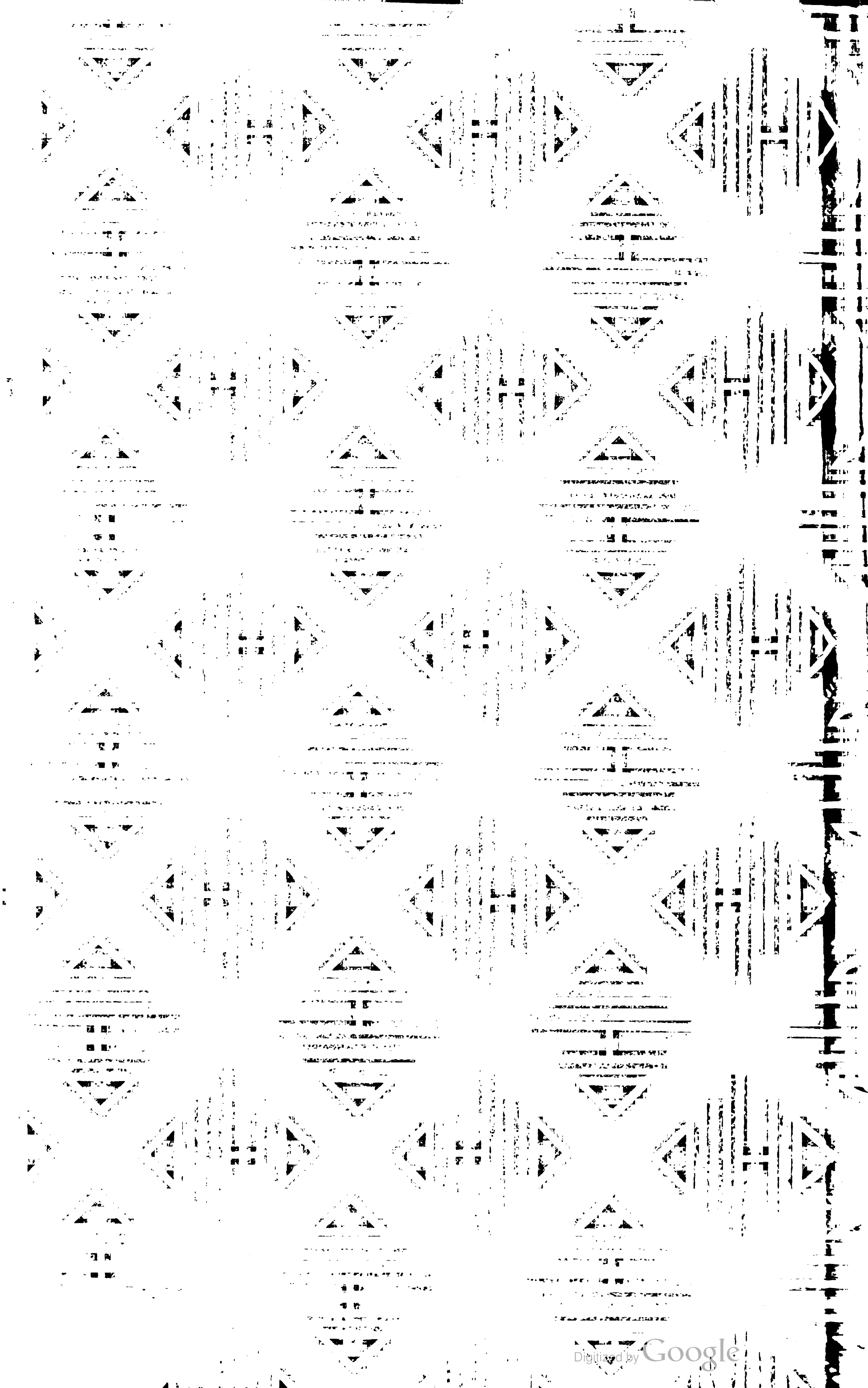15683